

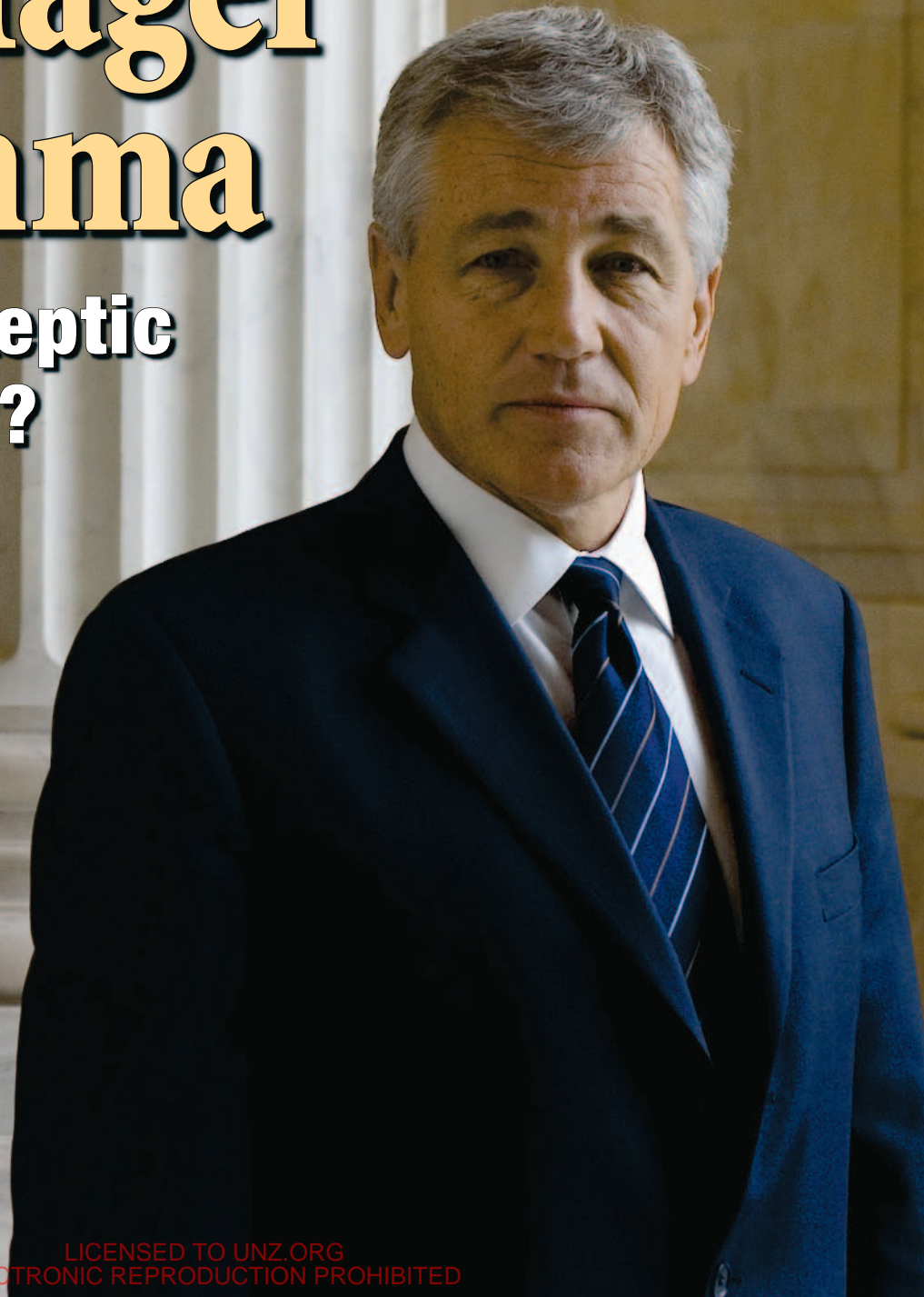
AMNESTY IMPASSE ■ CHINA'S LATTE LIBERALS? ■ TALIBAN SENDS FLOWERS

APRIL 9, 2007

# The American Conservative

## The Hagel Dilemma

**Can a war skeptic  
lead the GOP?**



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## A WISER ZION

By chance I happened upon Scott McConnell's article, "Bloggers vs. the Lobby" (March 12), and recognized my "regrettably anonymous" comment from Ezra Klein's blog that was quoted at length. I was flattered by the citation, as well as his description of it. I remember hesitating before clicking through to publish it, knowing that it was indeed "unrealistic," as he pointed out, but wondering whether that was reason enough to not air it in public. To hear the vision called noble, then, is gratifying, and I felt obliged to introduce myself.

I would take issue only with the idea that the suggestion is "dovish." In conventional terms it is, since it argues a peaceful resolution to regional conflicts. But in another sense it's not at all so, since it's the peace that comes only from a position of strength and security. The warrior must know how to put down his arms, otherwise he can only defend and destroy and never build. Rabin knew this. Sharon seemed like he might have been testing the waters.

The State of Israel was built by people who, with no realistic expectation of success, nonetheless rolled up their sleeves and got to work. The weapons came later to defend what they had built. It's time to put the weapons down and get back to the building, this time on a broad regional level. Sure it's unrealistic, but not any more so than the idea that a bunch of shtetl Jews might one day build a strong, fearless, secure nation in the heart of the Arab Middle East.

JUDAH GRUNSTEIN

*Provence, France*

## LEAVE OFF LABELS

I just read "Bloggers vs. the Lobby" from a link on Juan Cole's site. I am heartened to see that people are calling for more openness in discussing Israeli-American relations.

This is what is missing—a give and take of ideas, an acceptance that there might be gray areas or another side to an issue without being seen as disloyal or anti-Semitic. People should be able to think out loud without being seen as the enemy. Is this still America, or what?

Wesley Clark should not have apologized. I am Jewish and am annoyed at any organization that censors ideas through this type of pressure. Can't we disagree without resorting to tired labels?

SARI REZNICK

*via e-mail*

## CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

I am an avid fan and subscriber of TAC from China. The Feb. 12 issue's cover article "The Next Conservatism," seemed to me incisive, insightful, and inspiring—except for one paragraph in which the authors appeared to echo the hoarse voice of the once voguish and always vacuous neocons calling for an "advanced," "flexible," "compact," and "mobile" military tailored to warfare with non-state forces. I found this weird concurrence self-contradicting and quite un-TAC.

Donald Rumsfeld, one of the disgraced architects of the Iraqi War and an impassioned preacher of this military mantra, adopted it in Iraq, ignoring the advice of more conventional military strategists like Gen. Eric Shinseki.

A wise policy of never getting involved in such stupid wars in the first place largely reduces if not totally eliminates the scenario of fighting non-state forces in the future. States will continue to be major players on the international arena and military opponents of U.S.

This is especially true of China, the largest emerging strategic rival and potential foe of the U.S. With outsourcing of both capital and technology to China that helps to empower it enor-

mously and the "streamlining" of the American military, the already much curtailed U.S. advantage will only become thinner.

When calling for tradition to be the core of the next conservatism, why betray the conventional understanding of national defense?

BILLY LI

*Peking, China*

## LET'S GO, DR. NO

In "Sizing Up Suitors" (March 26), Taki mentions several candidates for president, and as usual, he nails it with his wit and perception. But I don't know if I believe him when he says if he could choose his religion, he'd be a Mormon. No booze? I don't think they are much for the high life.

But seriously, when considering presidential candidates, how about Rep. Ron Paul, of whom Walter Williams has said if the Founding Fathers came back to life, he's one of only about three or four people in Congress they'd even talk to. Yes, I know, it's more likely that Osama bin Laden will convert to Mormonism than that Congressman Paul can get the Republican nomination. But we can dream, can't we? Here's a guy who was one of six Republicans in Congress to vote against the Iraq fiasco, who wants to abolish the IRS, and who votes against so much stuff that they call him "Dr. No."

It might be a little early, but I think you guys should seriously consider endorsing Congressman Paul. Unless some miracle happens and he gets the Republican nomination, I plan to write him in.

MARTHA MOYERS

*Harrisonburg, Va.*

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[ PROFILE ]

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[WAR]

## FOUR MORE YEARS?

When George W. Bush unleashed shock and awe on Iraq, he couldn't have dreamed that four years later he'd mark the day with a plea for patience. That wasn't the way the liberation fantasy was supposed to work. We were going to ride triumphant into Baghdad, topple the tyrant, and teach the Arabs to elect good men. "It could last six days, six weeks. I doubt six months," Donald Rumsfeld predicted. We all know how that turned out.

Bush's democratic delusion has claimed 3,200 American and 60,000 Iraqi lives, maimed countless more, and cost \$500 billion. All totals rising. To our lost blood and treasure, add an evaporation of international goodwill, an Army exhausted, and a homeland imperiled by new enemies. Still the Decider clings tight to his fallacy: "Four years after this war began, the fight is difficult, but it can be won."

Easy words in the Roosevelt Room. But those closer to the action take a different view. A poll of 2,200 Iraqis found that two in three fear that a member of their household will fall victim to violence; 78 percent oppose the American presence (up from 51 percent in 2004); and 51 percent feel it is acceptable to attack our forces.

Asked about the war funding bill pending before Congress, White House Press Secretary Tony Snow said that voting against the legislation would "provide victory for the enemy." But on this grim anniversary, it's difficult to see how plowing deeper into Iraq doesn't accomplish that very end.

[BELTWAY]

## FREDO UNDER FIRE

In normal circumstances, White House involvement in the firing of eight U.S. attorneys wouldn't budge the scandal meter. Are politics involved? Yes, certainly, but the executive branch has a great deal of political power. Any Demo-

crat would likely wield the power to hire and fire U.S. attorneys the same way. The fact that President Clinton sacked the whole slate of them upon assuming office seems to be a pretty effective talking point—for those inclined to defend President Bush.

But the fact is that a shrinking number of people are inclined to defend the president and his acolytes. You can't find a serious person in Washington who believes that Alberto Gonzales is an impressive attorney general or even an adequate one. He is a political loyalist: someone who owes his career to attaching himself to George W. Bush early on and rising far beyond his natural level of competence.

A growing number of Republicans, not to mention Democrats, are no longer willing to cut the White House slack on this kind of cronyism. Three years ago, the Bushies might have been able to shrug off Gonzales's incompetence. But the full weight of the failed presidency—the disastrous war, the Manichean self-righteousness, the seeming smugness—now weigh on every matter. Bush, as of this writing, is standing by his vassal, digging in to defy congressional subpoenas

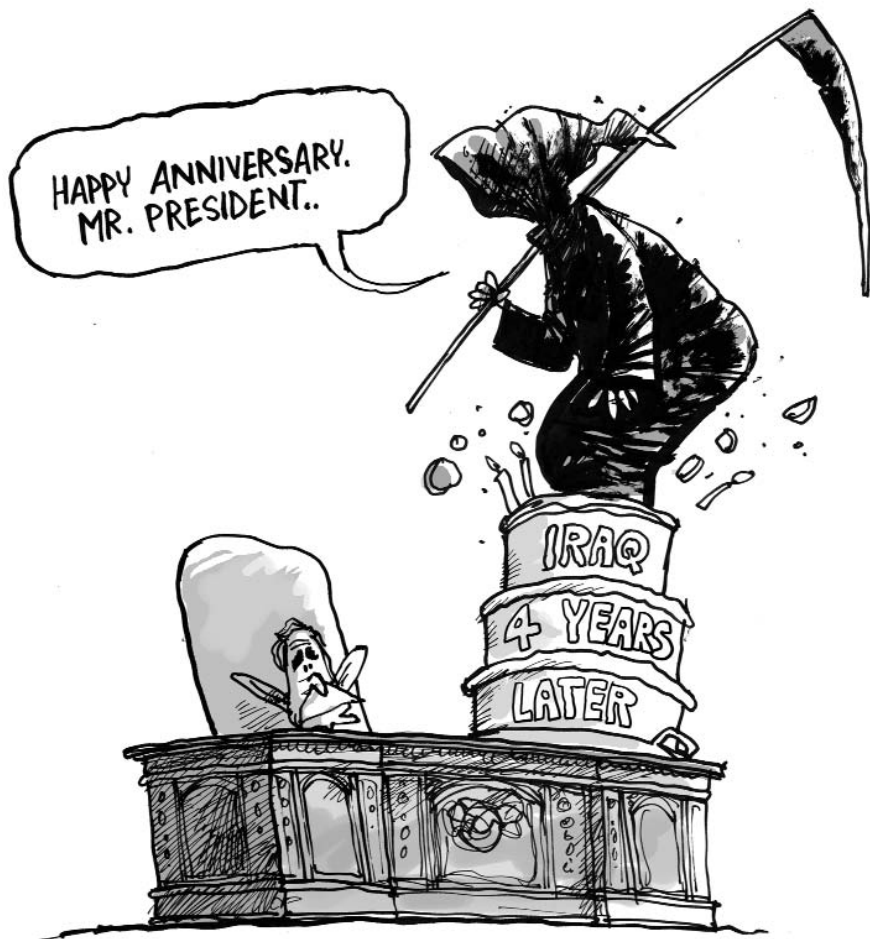
that would require members of his administration to testify under oath.

But the problem is deeper than Gonzales or U.S. attorneys. At its core is a presidency Americans of both parties want desperately to be done with so they can attempt to clean up the messes it is leaving in its wake.

[ALLIES]

## A FRIEND IN PARIS

French President Jacques Chirac, who announced last week that he would retire at the end of his term, presided over the most contentious period in French/American relations. Few would have predicted that: Chirac knew the United States better than most foreign leaders, having studied and worked here in the 1950s; he spoke English fluently; and throughout his long political career he had a pro-American reputation. But Chirac also knew something about war and occupation, having served as a lieutenant during the French Algerian War, and this got him in trouble with the enthusiasts of invading Iraq, some of whom went so far as to banish the term "French fries" from the House of Representatives' menu.



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Chirac's experience in Algeria helped convince him that Americans would eventually be viewed in Iraq not as liberators but as occupiers. He tried to persuade President Bush of this in a private meeting during the 2002 summit of Western leaders in Prague, but Bush dismissed his arguments, asserting that no Iraqis, except perhaps a few dead-enders from Saddam's regime, would resist American forces.

Months later, France refused to rubber-stamp American invasion plans at the United Nations, and the American War Party ginned up an entire public-relations industry to vilify the country.

Obviously, Chirac's view has been proven correct, and we hope that if he were to make a post retirement visit to United States, he would receive the warmest of welcomes. In diplomacy as in life, true friends aren't necessarily those who tell you what you want to hear.

[LOBBY]

## DIMINISHING RETURNS

The American Israeli Public Affairs Committee, the most formidable foreign-power lobby in U.S. history, held its annual Washington convention in mid-March. Some things about the event don't seem to change: the endless parade of elected officials eager to pledge their devotion to Israel's aims no matter how its government might define them. But some things do, and this year's AIPAC conference had some interesting wrinkles.

Virtually unprecedented was the fact that several senior Democratic politicians gave the crowd something other than Arab-bashing red meat. Barack Obama—who in an Iowa campaign appearance had made a “gaffe” (aptly defined by Michael Kinsley as when a politician tells the truth) by asserting that no group in the Mideast is suffering more than the Palestinian people—failed to apologize. He reportedly “set

off murmurs” in the crowd by asserting that cynicism was an obstacle to peace in the Middle East and urged that peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians be pursued vigorously. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi was actually booed when she told the assembled AIPAC delegates that she didn't support George W. Bush's Iraq escalation plan.

Adding a new tone was keynote speaker Pastor John Hagee, a charismatic Christian Zionist who regularly rails against the antichrist. Hagee didn't stress his eschatology in his AIPAC talk, contenting himself with denouncing any kind of peace initiative. One delegate was quoted as saying “I'm going to vote for him instead of McCain.”

Press accounts of the gathering give the impression that, despite its impressive financial clout and enthusiastic delegates, AIPAC is cutting itself adrift from the vital center of American politics. If this means the group will have less influence over America's Mideast policies, it's very good news.

[MEDIA]

## IN WITH THE NEW

TAC is pleased to announce a significant change in this issue's masthead. Ron Unz, a California-based software developer, has become the magazine's new publisher. Unz has an extensive record as a political activist, organizing the English for the Children ballot initiatives that mandated English language instruction and an end to bilingual education in several states. These initiatives have likely done more to aid the assimilation of the post-1980 wave of immigrants than any other single public-policy measure.

Scott McConnell will remain as TAC's editor, and readers can expect the magazine to stay on track and continue to espouse a sane and realistic form of conservatism. We have every expectation that niche will grow dramatically in the years ahead. ■

# The American Conservative

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# We Don't Live in Lake Wobegone

Two weeks ago, a jolting report on American education hit the headlines, was discussed by the punditocracy, and forgotten.

It needs to be revisited for what it says of the success of our having plunged trillions of tax dollars into public education to validate an ideology of egalitarianism that has done almost as much damage to the U.S. as Lysenkoism did to Russia in Stalin's time.

Egalitarianism teaches that all children can be taught to read and do math "proficiently"—the declared goal of No Child Left Behind by 2014. To question this, says President Bush, is to indulge in "the soft bigotry of low expectations."

Egalitarianism tells us that if we increase teachers' salaries, reduce class size, and put poor kids in Head Start, every child can make it through high school and go on to college.

But science is the history of beautiful theories destroyed in collisions with ugly facts. What are the ugly facts about education?

A performance test given by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, "the nation's report card," to 21,000 high-school seniors from 900 public and private schools in 2005 found:

- Since 1990, the share of students lacking even basic reading skills had risen from 20 percent to 27 percent.
- Only 35 percent of high-school seniors—20 percent of Hispanics and 16 percent of blacks—had reached a proficient level in reading. In 1990, it was 40 percent.
- Only 29 percent of white students, 10 percent of Hispanics, and 6 percent of black students were proficient in math by senior year in high school.

This is only the half of it. Among the kids whose test scores were not factored in were the 25 percent of white students and 50 percent of black and Hispanic kids who had already dropped out of school.

Factor the dropouts back in and what the NAEP test suggests is grim. Of all black kids starting out in first grade, perhaps one out of eight will graduate from high school able to read at the level of a high-school senior. One in 33 will be able to do 12th-grade math. Among Hispanic kids, one in 10 will be able to read at a high-school senior level. One in 20 will be able to do high-school math. Trillions of dollars—for this?

What is happening? Nothing unexpected to Charles Murray, co-author of *The Bell Curve*, the controversial work on IQ and its correlation with progress in school and life. "We do not live in Lake Wobegon" where all the kids are above average, he writes. "Our ability to improve the academic accomplishments of students in the lower half of the distribution of intelligence is severely limited. It is a matter of ceilings."

Children with an IQ of 88 or below, 20 percent of American kids, will never be proficient in reading or math, says Murray. Period. If a boy with an IQ below 100, the U.S. average, is getting D's in reading, it may not be "within his power to learn to follow an exposition written beyond a limited level of complexity, any more than it is within my power to follow a proof in the *American Journal of Mathematics*."

Murray writes what few dare to say. Just as we are not all equally gifted artistically and athletically, we are not all equally gifted academically.

Intelligence, which can be determined by kindergarten and cannot be significantly improved, is a determinant of how well a child can do in school. And the correlation between IQ and academic performance is about absolute.

We may bemoan it. There is nothing we can do about it. "[N]o matter how much money we are willing to spend," writes Murray, "There is no reason to believe that raising intelligence significantly and permanently is a current policy option."

In essence, Murray's case runs thus: Intelligence can be measured. It cannot be significantly raised. It is unequally distributed. It is the critical factor in limiting how far a child can go in learning, comprehension, and math. It makes no more sense to break the bank trying to teach kids beyond their capacity than it does to try to get a slow-footed kid to run the 100 in ten seconds. Ergo, we are wasting immense sums of money trying to get kids to perform academically beyond their capacity, money better spent steering them into vocational schools and rewarding careers that do not require academic proficiency.

As the top 10 percent in a society, those with IQ's above 120, will be the pacesetters in business, politics, the arts and sciences, and professions, we should devote more resources to them and push them harder than we do, not only to excel but to reach a level where they "hit the wall," as other kids do in junior high and high school.

Put as much effort into making the varsity the best as into making sure everyone has an equal chance to compete. Anybody got a better idea? ■

# Hagel's Dilemma

The senator is vague about his political future but clear in his opposition to the Iraq War.

By Kelley Beaucar Vlahos

SOMETHING HAPPENED to Sen. Charles T. "Chuck" Hagel on the way to the press conference. The man of seemingly impenetrable defenses and unshakable disposition took the curious step of announcing on March 12 that he had nothing to announce about his much-anticipated run for president, making himself vulnerable to spurned reporters and snarky bloggers for days afterward.

The 60-year-old Nebraska Republican is known for playing it close to the vest but seemed to surprise even his staff with his non-announcement. Deflated supporters did not know what to think when he told reporters at the University of Nebraska event, planned days before, that he was still mulling his options.

Others say he was spooked.

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There is a political web set to snare Hagel on the road to a Republican nomination, and it was no more evident than at the annual Conservative Political Action Conference in March.

Throbbing with the conservative movement's old guard elite and college acolytes—who seem to spend most of their time waiting in line for autographs from Newt Gingrich or jamming into the ballroom to catch the likes of Ann Coulter flinging the customary red meat—this Washington confab had little time for Hagel. Questioned about a potential run, these self-proclaimed right wingers typically responded with a roll of the eyes and a shrug at best, at worst, a

blank stare. That Republican is just not one of us, they said.

Yet here at ground zero of the conservative movement were innumerable depictions of the late President Ronald Reagan, tons of literature and rhetoric about the sanctity of life, traditional values, constitutional correctness, limited government, states' rights, and self-determination. In his 11 years as a U.S. senator, Hagel has in some way defended them all, yet he is a pariah in what should be his political comfort zone.

"I've heard people joke that Chuck Hagel has a better chance at getting the Democratic nomination," said Larry Sabato, political guru at the University of Virginia, of Hagel's "base problem."

Simply put, it is the 800-pound gorilla that no one at CPAC wanted to talk about this year—the war in Iraq—that has come between Hagel and the conservative grassroots. It is why they are willing to overlook Republican Rudy Giuliani's anti-gun and pro-gay positions or Mitt Romney's mid-career conversion against abortion. Rewarded with rock-star treatment at CPAC, both of those presidential hopefuls eagerly brandished their support for President George W. Bush on the war—if they were forced to talk about it.

Iraq is something that Hagel likes to talk about—a lot. But it's not what the CPAC faithful wanted to hear. In a recent interview in his Senate office, he explained why being conservative and condemning the Bush administration's policy in Iraq—and in broader terms,

Bush's foreign policy in the Muslim world—aren't mutually exclusive.

"Conservatives, I've always known, like this guy up there," he said, gesturing to a framed picture of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, "and Reagan, Goldwater, and others—[Sen. Robert] Taft, Mr. Conservative—were very protective in conserving our resources. And what is more significant in a country's resource inventory than its people, its army? I think we have used our military recklessly and carelessly. I don't think that's conservative." He continued, "I find it fascinating sometimes when I am challenged on this. I think I am the real conservative on the Iraq debate here."

President Bush's loyal congressional supporters, bolstered by the base, beg to differ. They find Hagel's brand of realist internationalism, his hammering away at the Iraq policy as a misbegotten adventure akin to the Vietnam War he nearly died in, quite noisome. They've called him an appeaser, a traitor even. A personally popular senator with 35-year-old ties to the Republican Party, his detractors have done everything to marginalize him.

"Talk about no good deed going unpunished. If you use voting record as the center of the senator's conservatism, he is in the charmed circle," said Ross Baker, a political science professor at Rutgers University, who has taken several sabbaticals to work in the Senate, serving on Hagel's staff in 2000 and 2004. "As far as foreign policy is concerned, they [the conservative base] regard him



as an apostate,” he added. “These are people who believe that anybody who contradicts the president has to be cast out into the darkness.”

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Just before beginning his March press conference, Hagel took a moment to acknowledge a man in the front row, his Washington mentor and longtime friend, former Congressman John Y. McCollister, who represented Nebraska from 1971 to 1976. Hagel served as his chief of staff.

The 85-year old Nebraskan knows all too well the obstacles facing his former protégé. He hears the complaints and reads the letters to the editor in the Nebraska papers criticizing Hagel’s public disagreements with Bush and the GOP.

“For many people I know, they think Chuck Hagel has departed from his conservative base and has now embraced the liberals—that’s not true,” he said in an interview. “[They feel] that some of his comments were not necessary. Well placed, but unnecessarily harsh.” He doesn’t disagree, and with obvious pain in his voice acknowledges that he and the senator had spoken less frequently since he confronted Hagel about what he saw as inappropriate political behavior.

So it may have been a surprise when Hagel invited him to the press conference. That might have been a calculated move to firm up political support from his old boss despite their differences, but it is clear a lot of affection and loyalty remain between the two.

“I think Chuck Hagel, except on Iraq, is the most conservative member of the United States Senate because he has a firm philosophical understanding—he’s a great reader—and a fascination for American history, for how our nation came into being.” Describing him as “incredibly bright” and a “delightful companion,” McCollister said Hagel always

had an “insatiable appetite for all the facts leading up to an issue.” That doesn’t always mix well with party politics.

“Members of Congress are supposed to take the long view, they’re supposed to ask the tough questions,” he said. “Chuck Hagel does that. I think he does it better than anybody I know. But it’s gotten him into big trouble with his Republican base. I’m sorry about that.”

McCollister may have unknowingly set Hagel’s rebellion into motion, or at least set a precedent. While in office, McCollister was one of the first Republicans to speak out against Nixon’s role in the Watergate scandal.

“John, he was very courageous, standing up to the Nixon people and saw through what was going on,” said Randy Moody, another Vietnam veteran who worked with Hagel as McCollister’s press secretary. He has been friends with Hagel since, and believes Nebraskans are still proud of him. “Not everyone understands what he is doing, and he has taken some heat,” said Moody, now a lobbyist at the National Education Association. “But I think he has their support as well.”

And then some, said Craig Safranek, head of the Custer County Republicans in Nebraska. To supporters like him, the so-called base didn’t do a very good job of protecting the party’s interests in the 2006 midterm elections. But there are plenty of hopeful libertarians, independents, and foreign-policy realists in the Republican ranks who believe Hagel can lead the party out of 15 years of broken pledges, bloated government, partisan chicanery, corruption, and war.

“I think Americans, and the Republican Party, need a thinker, rather than a party person or right winger who doesn’t care, doesn’t think,” said Safranek. Despite his bright red record, Hagel’s pragmatism on the war is attractive to the political middle, Safranek insists. In fact, Hagel already has a constituency among Democrats disillusioned with

their own party’s presidential prospects, who dream of Hagel running as a third party or “Unity ’08” candidate. “[Republicans] will see him as their shining hope,” Safranek cheerily predicted, “once they get to know him they will love him.”

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To know Hagel is to know that he served alongside his brother Tom as an infantryman in the jungles of Vietnam. Given their dramatic story, it becomes clear that while McCollister may have provided the senator’s political compass, Vietnam likely forged his conscience.

“He’s the guy who has seen a great deal of combat, he knows what it’s like to be on the ground,” said Rick Weidman, a fellow Vietnam vet and head of government affairs for Vietnam Veterans of America. “I think much of his attitude [about Iraq] is colored by his wartime experience,” he added, noting of the strain on the Army and National Guard, the treatment of the veterans as they return home from Iraq, “it’s gotten to them all. Chuck is outraged ... as he should be.”

In a caricatured political landscape where Democrats are always the doves and Republicans the hawks who get to wave the flag, Hagel has emerged as his own political animal, drawing strength from growing public unrest in the midterm elections and challenging his own party to pay attention to the consequences of their deference to the Bush foreign policy.

“Thank God, I say,” Tom Hagel, a law professor at the University of Dayton, enthused about his brother. “On this issue, he’s going against his party. And he’s taking an amazing amount of flak for it.”

People describe Hagel as confident, but he carries no swagger. Unlike many politicians of his stature, the weight of all the decisions he has made—and has yet to make—are visible on his face. A writer once described it a “sad face,” a



less tactful blogger suggested he get a facelift. But to many it's comforting to see worry lines on a guy who is sending their kids off to war.

By a stroke of bureaucratic fate, Chuck and Tom—nearly kids themselves—ended up in the same unit in the Mekong River Delta in South Vietnam in 1968. In March of that year, the brothers—Chuck, 21, was a sergeant and squad leader—were on jungle patrol when the men on point tripped a booby trap, sending shrapnel through the air. Tom told a Nebraska Educational Television special in 1999 that, after pulling himself from the ground, he went to his brother lying on the ground and tore open his shirt, “and that’s when geysers of blood went up.” Ripped from shrapnel himself, Tom, 19, stanchied Chuck’s bleeding with bandages. They recovered together in a field hospital.

Less than a month later, Chuck’s face was set aflame as he was pulling fellow soldiers—including a bleeding and unconscious Tom—out of a convoy that had run over a landmine and was subsequently pinned down under enemy fire. It would take a decade for the burns on Chuck’s face to heal, and pieces of shrapnel in his chest still serve as a grim souvenir, but both brothers returned to Nebraska physically intact.

For his service, Chuck received two Purple Hearts and Tom was awarded three. University of Nebraska journalism professor Charlyne Berens, who wrote the 2006 biography *Chuck Hagel: Moving Forward*, said Hagel recalled to her his evacuation after the second incident, his face broiled and his ear drums ruptured. He thought, “If I ever get out, and if I ever can influence anything, I will do all I can to prevent war.”

To Berens, that explains why he chooses to place himself at odds with a party he has always been loyal to, even during grade school, where he was the only kid in a Catholic school wild about

John F. Kennedy who dared brandish a picture of Richard M. Nixon on his book.

“I think, on a very personal level, he feels responsible for putting anyone else in that kind of situation,” she said in a recent phone interview. “He seemed to me pretty much what he appears to be, I didn’t sense much artifice there.”

It was Tom Hagel, the second of four brothers in a humble working-class family in North Platte, Nebraska, who soured on Vietnam and the policy that sent them there. Upon their return, he openly protested and fought often with Chuck, who believed at the time that the mission was just. It wasn’t until years later, while devouring every book on Indochina and the war, and listening to the released tapes of then-President Lyndon Johnson discussing Vietnam with Sen. Richard Russell of Georgia, that Chuck changed his mind. In those recorded echoes of history, he heard not a conversation about how to win the war and the mission but how to politicize and save face, Senator Hagel told the *Washington Post* in 2004. “I started connecting all the deaths and all the suffering and the chaos and wounds,” he said. “I started to sense a dishonesty about it all.”

**“THAT’S A LESSON WE DID NOT LEARN FROM VIETNAM,” HAGEL SAID. “WE’VE GOT A SIMILAR SITUATION IN IRAQ TODAY.”**

He not only believes now that the nation was misled into thinking the war in Vietnam was necessary but that ultimately U.S. policy in Vietnam failed because the American presence was an anathema to the people they were trying to protect. Furthermore, the U.S.-backed government there didn’t have the love of the people.

“That’s a lesson we did not learn from Vietnam,” Hagel said in his Senate office, artifacts of his military service all around him. His voice is a low rumble:

“The Vietnamese government we were propping up was losing the people. We’ve got a similar situation in Iraq today.”

There is a polished toughness about his manner that lends emphasis to every word. It made for good dramatic tension during a January Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing, where he pinned down Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice over her defense of the president’s surge.

Hagel doubts the long-term efficacy of sending 20,000 more troops—many of whom have already served one or two tours—into another internecine conflict. “You can’t work your way out of a problem by making it worse—we found that out in Vietnam—I mean year after year in Vietnam, month after month, we kept putting more troops in, and it turned out to be a huge fiasco for us,” he said. “It’s a huge fiasco for us in Iraq right now.”

He’s convinced that while the surge might provide a short-term exit strategy for American troops and an administration embattled by historically low approval ratings, it’s not a plan for permanent peace. Instead, he supports broader regional diplomacy, redeploying U.S. troops to the borders to prevent

terrorists from coming in and reducing the American footprint in population centers rife with sectarian tensions.

“They have a constitution, which we boast about, they have a freely elected government, which we boast about, it’s supposedly a unity government, which we boast about. Well, let them lead, let them govern,” the senator said, noting that he has never advocated a hasty withdrawal. “We’ll continue to help—we have to,” he said. “But we can’t govern, and that’s why we are seen now, by 80

percent of Iraqis found in any poll, as occupiers."

Sen. James Webb, another decorated Vietnam combat veteran, has similar reservations about the war in Iraq. He also counts Hagel a friend. "I've known Chuck Hagel for probably 28 years," he said in an interview. Webb, who was elected in November, had warned that invading Iraq would be a "strategic error" months before the 2003 bombing of Baghdad. He praised Hagel's courage to disagree with his party before the midterm elections revealed the vast majority of Americans were on his side.

"I think, quite frankly, that the Republican loyalists were wrong, and Chuck Hagel was right, and I salute him for not being a lemming," said Webb, who noted that the two "compare notes" from time to time. "We close the door, sit down, and talk about things."

Another Senate colleague, Sen. John McCain, also a decorated Vietnam War hero, plays a more complicated role in Hagel's life. While they both share the instinct to take unpopular positions, it is on Iraq that they part ways. As men they are close—photos of the two are part of Hagel's office décor—but observers say Iraq has put a strain on the working relationship.

McCain has his own problems. The Arizona senator is running for president, but his maverick status has seemingly taken a backseat to supporting the surge strategy. Despite this, he too has problems with the conservative base, which considers him a fickle friend, and his once ardent fans among independents and moderates think he panders too much to the Religious Right.

Weidman said Hagel has always been more sympathetic to veterans' issues than McCain. He believes Hagel's family background and combat experience has something to do with it.

"I think the world of Chuck Hagel," he said, recalling how Hagel quit his job as

deputy administrator for the Veterans Administration in 1982. His boss, then-Veterans Administrator Robert Nimmo, had a history of antagonizing Vietnam vets, calling them "crybabies" and seeking to cut off research into the physical effects of Agent Orange exposure, wrote Berens in *Moving Forward*.

Hagel quit and was unemployed at the age of 36; Nimmo soon resigned amid a threatening scandal over his use of the office for personal gain. To many, Hagel was a hero all over again.

"He resigned over principle, it was a wonderful scene," Weidman said, noting that Hagel immediately became "our champion in the Senate" when he was elected in 1996. Despite resistance, Hagel pushed through the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act in 1998. He has co-chaired the Agent Orange Settlement Fund, served as co-chair of the Vietnam War Memorial Fund, and has most recently pushed for more benefits and compensation for soldiers and their families.

"I think he would make a hell of a president," said Weidman. "He certainly wouldn't casually send our sons and daughters into hell."

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Hagel's March press conference did not produce the kind of stir a politician wants. One commentator called it "bizarre." Reporters were irritated about being dragged to Omaha for what was billed as Hagel's "announcement on his political future." Many who had believed the senator was finally ready to make his move to primetime as the one GOP candidate for president who didn't subordinate himself to Bush on the war were left puzzled.

"I guess nobody totally knows why. I think he's doing what he believes is right for the country and as a senator," said Safranek, who admitted Hagel's supporters in Nebraska were "dazed" by the developments.

Hagel, who has two school-age children with his wife Lilibet, promised a real answer regarding his candidacy later this year and insisted that he had planned all along to make the "non-announcement."

But others believe that Hagel, never known to shrink from a fight or cave to intimidation, had planned to throw his hat into the ring but was spooked at the last minute by a drumbeat of commentators saying he couldn't win a Republican primary, by surveys showing that more than 70 percent of Americans don't know what to think about him, by drowning at the bottom of every Republican primary poll out there.

"I can only believe that he had planned to announce and, at the last minute, had buyer's remorse. I think the economists call it 'terminal terror,'" said Baker.

People who know Chuck Hagel have said he never does anything without knowing all the angles and that he would never run without believing he could win. Perhaps, like any good tactician, he just needed to size up his obstacles first.

For example, he knows his vote for the 2002 Senate resolution authorizing the president to go to war will be an issue. "I laid out all of my reservations about the resolution," he said, referring to his Oct. 9, 2002 floor speech. "In the end, I voted for it because I was told by the administration that the president would not use military force unless all diplomatic options were exercised—they were not—but I think it's always dangerous not to give your president leverage and latitude, allowing him to deal with the international arena with unlimited powers."

"Would I vote for it today? No, I wouldn't," he added flatly. "We went into Iraq based on flawed judgment, based on dishonest motives, based on flawed intelligence, and we have a very, very big problem today."

Meanwhile, attacks from neoconservatives have been unrelenting, beginning

in 2002 when *National Review* labeled Hagel, “Sen. Skeptic, (R., France).” Just before the Iraq invasion, Bill Kristol of *The Weekly Standard* called Hagel a member of the “Axis of Appeasement.”

“They hate the idea of a morally grounded foreign policy that seeks aggressively and unapologetically to advance American principles around the world,” Kristol wrote in August 2002 of Hagel, former President George H.W. Bush adviser Brent Scowcroft, and others who hadn’t fully bought into the program and whose arguments against the war—destabilizing the region, getting bogged down in a bloody occupation, and undercutting the War on Terror on the basis of overstated threats—were “laughably weak.”

The reality on the ground in Iraq nearly four years later has not tempered their views. In fact, realists like Hagel and other congressional critics are emboldening the enemy, according to Vice President Dick Cheney and his surrogates on the talk-show circuit. Then there are the personal attacks: after Hagel’s March press conference, *National Review* contributor John Podhoretz dismissed him as a “megalomaniac.”

But on the issues, Hagel points out that he has voted with the president more than any other senator today and has a lifetime rating of 85 from the American Conservative Union.

He is pro-life, defends an individual’s right to bear arms, and supports a flag-burning amendment. A self-made millionaire—he started a cellular phone company that eventually became part of Vanguard Telecommunications in the ’80s—he draws high marks from pro-business and property-rights groups.

On the other hand, Hagel voted against the Republican-sponsored Medicare prescription drug bill and No Child Left Behind. He sides with the president on creating some kind of guest-worker program for illegal immigrants but does

not advocate a federal amendment to ban gay marriage.

It is no surprise, then, that some think he’s primed for a third-party breakout. If he can’t be the new face of the flagging, post-midterm GOP, then maybe it’s time to move on, the buzz goes. To his supporters, pragmatism is much more attractive than blind ideological genuflection.

“He definitely breaks the mold, his voice is so authentic in my view, and as a consequence he has great appeal,” said good friend and former Nebraska Sen. Bob Kerrey, a fellow Vietnam combat veteran who was one of the Senate’s most conservative Democrats until his retirement in 2001. “I’m sure it drives the White House crazy. If he ended up with the Republican nomination he would be a formidable candidate.”

Hagel’s conversational style is easy, even solicitous, but he doesn’t seem prone to name dropping or telling secrets, especially about himself. He

certainly won’t entertain speculation regarding his future, particularly where the conservative base “problem” is concerned. “I don’t let things like that worry me,” he said. “I just do what I think is right for my country.”

Baker said Republicans should worry about a liberated Senator Hagel. The current field of Republican candidates, according to recent surveys, are not endearing GOP voters. “If they could forgive his sensible and often prescient view on foreign policy,” said Baker, “he would probably be one of the few Republicans with a prayer of retaining the White House for the party in 2008.”

Safranek doesn’t think Hagel has been spooked for good, noting that supporters there in Nebraska are “ready to go all out” for him. “He has a plan,” he said. “He always does.” ■

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# Hegemony Lite

How different would a Hagelian foreign policy be?

**By James P. Pinkerton**

CHUCK HAGEL has walked the walk. His experience in military service, not to mention his medal-winning heroism in Vietnam four decades ago, distinguishes him from most of those who make American foreign policy these days. But as for talking the talk—well, his talk about foreign policy isn’t ultimately much different from that of the foreign-policy establishment that got us into Iraq and that wants to keep us imposing martial hegemony in the Middle East forever.

So those who rhapsodize over a possible Hagel run for the White House might consider the question: if the Cornhusker

senator becomes the 44th president, would a Hagelian foreign policy represent a true change in direction, or would it be merely a slow-boat chug along the same route we are on now?

Indeed, that’s a good question to ask all of those who seek to replace George W. Bush in the Oval Office. Is the next president, whoever he or she might be, going to offer a bold-colors alternative to the Bush/neoconservative status quo, or will we get a pale-pastel continuation of Bushconism?

As far back as February 2002, in the days following the 43rd president’s “axis



of evil” speech, the Nebraskan recalled his own wartime service as a counterweight to the Texan’s soaring bear-any-burden rhetoric. The rime of an ancient soldier, one might say. Hagel had been there and done that in ’Nam; he and his two Purple Hearts knew better about war than the unscarred ex-Guardsmen and draft-deferring grad students sitting in the White House.

Yet in October of 2002, Hagel voted “aye” on the Bush-Cheney Iraq War resolution, joining forces with those who took Uncle Sam waist-deep into the Big Sandy.

Since then, of course, Hagel has frequently compared Iraq to Vietnam, referring to each as a “national tragedy.” Warming to his theme, he has condemned the Surge of ’07 as “the most dangerous foreign policy blunder in this country since Vietnam.” And in his curious announcement of non-announcement for the presidency on March 12, he declared that in Iraq, “America is facing its most divisive and difficult issue since Vietnam.”

No kidding. But what remains to be seen is what Hagel would truly do about Iraq that’s different from what has been done and is being done. Even as he was non-announcing, Hagel seemed at pains to reassure his audience that he was not going to offer any starkly divergent choice to Americans—not then, not ever. “At the beginning of my remarks I said that America is reaching for a national consensus of purpose,” he said as he wrapped up. “We will find it because Americans expect it and will demand it. I do not believe America’s greatness is lost to the 20th century. There are chapters of America’s greatness yet to be written.” And, he assured everyone, “I intend to continue being part of America’s story.”

That’s the sort of high-minded but windy rhetoric that just about any politician might say on just about any

issue. But in context, Hagel’s use of such neocon-favored words as “greatness” can only be taken as a signal that he supports foreign policy continuity, even in the Middle East. Indeed, back on Capitol Hill three days later, Hagel voted with Mitch McConnell and all the other Bush loyalists to oppose a Democratic plan to bring most U.S. troops out of Iraq by 2008. Which is to say, Hagel came down on the opposite side from his fellow Vietnam vet, John Murtha, who has come to emblemize, in his 70s, a dovishness that represents at least a partial discontinuity from the current policy thrust. But not Hagel: while he talks his own Vietnam-inflected talk, he still walks the Bush Iraq walk.

Undoubtedly, Chuck Hagel will continue to criticize Iraq; he might even continue to throw around the word “impeachment,” without ever clarifying his own position on such a possibility. But after voting for Bush’s war at every key juncture, he is vulnerable to the charge of mere carping and second-guessing, as opposed to paradigm shifting.

It’s worth recalling that there were plenty of fierce critics of Vietnam who trashed that war’s conduct, too, without ever opposing its logic. Even some of the architects of the war got into the act. For example, Lyndon Johnson’s National Security Adviser Walt Rostow, who lived for 35 years after leaving the White House, was eager during those many decades to blame others for errors and blunders—although he was never willing to entertain the idea that the war itself was the mistake.

So it will be with Iraq. Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, and all the rest of the War Partiers will undoubtedly be writing screeds and tomes. Yet seeking to vindicate the war, they will separate out “the mistakes that were made” from their own original brilliant conception of regime changing and democracy

building. There will be some agreed-upon fall guys—maybe Don Rumsfeld or Doug Feith or even Bush himself. But for the most part, the vision of a Middle Eastern Pax Americana—punctuated, of course, by *Bellum Americanum* when needed—will be endorsed and further enshrined.

And chances are good there won’t be much pushback from the Democrats, even in the future. Aside from the occasional Murtha, the party establishment is loath to criticize the basic purpose of the war as opposed to its prosecution. After all, most Big Dems supported the war in the 2002-03 run-up, and even after four years of Iraq, most donkeys still clutch onto words like “tough” and “muscular” to describe their preferred foreign policy, especially in regard to the Middle East—even as they deride Bush as a gunslinging cowboy.

On both sides of the partisan aisle, the basic consensus endures: it is America’s duty and destiny to shape and reshape the area defined by the Pentagon as Central Command—aptly named because the region stretching from Egypt to Pakistan is so central to American geopolitical thinking. And so we must, the consensus continues, all be Tommy Franks: we must be ready to use force to defend not only Israel but also its occupation of Arab territories. At the same time, we must persevere in Afghanistan and mind the rest of the “Stans.” We must safeguard Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the oil routes out of the Persian Gulf. We must keep Turkey happy. Yet we must also check Iranian ambitions, as well as thwart any possible Russian resurgence or Chinese adventurism. And, of course, we have to keep the Shia Arabs under control in Iraq, even as we seek to bring them into the same political harness as the Sunni Arabs and the Kurds.

The fact that contours of those many missions are so familiar to Americans is

revealing; they are the curves of binding energy that keep just about all politicians close to what might be called the “hegemonist consensus.” And much of the elite media, too: even now, the *Washington Post* editorial page, which elevated the re-election of Joe Lieberman and the protection of Scooter Libby into sacred causes, spends its time looking for Democrats to applaud for applauding the war.

So would the Middle East be much different today if John Kerry had been elected president three years ago? Probably not. In his Nov. 3, 2004 concession speech, the Massachusetts senator told his supporters in Boston, “Now more than ever with our soldiers in harm’s way, we must stand together and succeed in Iraq.” In his heart of hearts, Kerry is probably still the disillusioned man who testified against Vietnam before the Senate 36 years ago, but a President Kerry would have had to disabuse himself of his disillusion: once in office, he would have had to start thinking immediately about the next midterm election, not to mention his own campaign for a second term. And that would have meant “succeeding” in Iraq and the Middle East.

Similarly, one suspects that Hillary Rodham Clinton is still, deep down, an ecstatic love child of the ’60s. But to make it politically in the decades since, she has had to up-armor herself with cynicism and hypocrisy—the very evils she once inveighed against. Now she stiffarms the neo-New Left wing of her party and holds close to the hegemonist consensus, right alongside Kerry. Yes, Bush screwed up Iraq, Democrats agree, but we can’t just walk away, and we certainly can’t walk away from the whole Middle East.

In March, Clinton told the *New York Times* that “remaining vital national security interests in Iraq” would require a continuing deployment of American

troops, well past the end of the Bush presidency. Warning that a failed Iraqi state would be “a petri dish for insurgents and Al Qaeda,” she added that Iraq is “right in the heart of the oil region.” And of course, protection of “Israel’s interests” would incline her even further toward staying in Iraq.

Then there’s Iran and the rest of the Middle East. Every major politician in America declares a nuclearized Iran to be unacceptable, and neither Hagel nor the Democratic leadership seem eager to confront the administration on whether or not the president must seek specific authorization for a military strike against Tehran. In addition, the American political class agrees on a long list of outcomes deemed unacceptable, such as a Taliban victory in Afghanistan or a bin-Ladenized Saudi Arabia. Yes, most Democrats, and many Republicans, would like to see American policy become more multilateral—but the guiding presumption seems to be that the United States should figure out ways to persuade our allies to share in our policies, as distinct from actually changing our policies in collaboration with them. Indeed, in some troubled parts of the greater Middle East, such as Darfur, the Democrats seem determined to one-up Bush in terms of demonstrating America’s “indispensability.”

So it’s little wonder that Hagel, personal pique and prejudice aside, seems so supportive of Bush’s overall vision for the Middle East—because it’s the shared vision of the American political elite. Hagel might not hold much affection for the president and his team, and he obviously thinks he could do a better job managing national security policy, but the Nebraskan shows no sign of wanting to extract himself from the thick swath of stand-pat-on-the-Middle-East thinking that layers the country from New York to California.

There are alternatives, of course, and some can be found in Hagel’s own history. He sits in the Senate seat once occupied by George W. Norris, the Republican isolationist progressive who opposed U.S. entry into both World War I and World War II. Norris existed outside of the internationalist consensus of his time, as popularized by Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt. And while recent history has not been kind to isolationism—Norris was defeated for re-election in the first election after Pearl Harbor—one can imagine that a new cycle of American realism, if not outright isolationism, is gaining momentum in reaction to Bushite neoconservatism.

It’s possible that the same landlocked environment that bred Norris and so many other anti-interventionist Midwesterners in the century past—from Robert Taft to George McGovern—has imprinted Hagel, too, with the urge to tend his own country’s garden first and foremost.

So maybe, as president, he would chart a new course for America. Starting from his own bitter experience in Vietnam and continuing with what he has learned in the decades since—that is, about the success of Cold War containment and the failure of regime changing—maybe he would summon a new way of talking the talk of American self-interest, while walking the walk of good-neighboring and international law-abiding.

Maybe Hagel would do all that and more. It’s nice to think he would, but there’s not much evidence to support such a hope. ■

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# Amnesty Impasse

Bush's immigration bill bogs down.

By Michael Brendan Dougherty

ON MARCH 6, federal agents raided a leather goods factory in New Bedford, Massachusetts, arresting 361 illegal immigrants. The news hounded President Bush during his diplomatic tour of Latin America. Guatemalan President Oscar Berger denounced the raid and personally asked Bush to halt the deportations. Mexican President Felix Calderon similarly chastised Bush, saying that U.S. border policy is "absurd." Bush countered with a bold promise: "My pledge to you and your government, but more important to the people of Mexico, is I'll work as hard as I possibly can to pass comprehensive immigration reform."

But pushing that legislation through the 110th Congress may be more difficult than the administration anticipates.

When Democrats took control of Congress, White House Press Secretary Tony Snow said that the president saw "new opportunities for comprehensive immigration reform." Assuming that comprehensive reform meant amnesty, border hawks were despondent. The most visible restrictionist in Congress, Rep. Tom Tancredo lamented, "We will fight it, we will lose. It will go to the Senate, it will pass. The president will sign it. And it will happen quickly..."

Asked about that post-election despair, Tancredo press aide Carlos Espinosa chuckles, "Obviously a lot has changed since then." "They have stalled the process," he says of the current state of play, "And that is working in our favor."

A rewritten version of last session's McCain-Kennedy immigration bill has been promised but has not been introduced. McCain's aides began circulating rumors that he may not want his name

attached to a bill unpopular with the conservative grassroots while he's campaigning for the Republican presidential nomination. Confirming that suspicion, the *New York Times* reported, "as he left Iowa, Mr. McCain said he was reconsidering his views on how the immigration law might be changed." Frustrated that disagreements were slowing the process, Kennedy elected to proceed on his own, promising to re-introduce legislation approved last year by the Judiciary Committee but never scheduled for a floor vote.

Senators have been meeting in evening sessions to discuss compromise bills. The White House dispatched Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff and Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez to grease the skids. But one Republican aide says that pressure from the White House "is not having the impact it once had. It's called being a lame duck."

The major sticking points revolve around the size and scope of the guest-worker program and the details of a path to citizenship for guest workers and illegal residents. But the pace of the process has caused some Democrats to wonder whether the Senate's eyes for immigration reform aren't bigger than its stomach: "I am now of the opinion that we may have reached too far in doing the comprehensive bill," said Dianne Feinstein.

Bush is counting on his No Child Left Behind point man: "[there is] a very good chance of getting the [immigration] bill out of the Senate, because Senator Kennedy is one of the best legislative senators there is..." But the Massachusetts liberal faces an uphill climb: in the closely divided Senate, Kennedy's bill, as

currently written, would likely lose support from red-state Democrats like Claire McCaskill and Jon Tester.

His efforts are further complicated by renewed lobbying efforts. The AFL-CIO is pressuring Kennedy to apply the Davis-Bacon Act, which would mandate that guestworkers receive "local prevailing wages and benefits." That would drastically increase the cost of an immigrant workforce, rendering it useless to employers looking for cheap labor.

But he's not giving up. According to Kennedy spokeswoman Laura Capps, he is still "working closely with GOP senators and the White House on the bill"—though she stopped short of predicting when the long-awaited legislation would arrive.

In the House, Congressman Steve King expects the immigration showdown to happen this summer. Commenting on the negotiations, the Iowa congressman's voice drips with sarcasm, "Really, it's a masterful political strategy to count the votes before there even is a bill." He observes that every time Congress gets ready to pass some kind of amnesty "they play this hide-the-ball game. They don't want to leave any time for debate on the floor." "They're looking for 20 to 30 Republican votes in the Senate and 50 to 70 in the House—nearly a third of our conference" to give the bill a bipartisan gloss and offset border-security Democrats, King says.

Indeed, many freshman Democrats found success running to the right on immigration. McCaskill and Tester ran ads criticizing the president's position. In the House, high-profile winners Zack Space, Brad Ellsworth, and Heath Schuler not only condemned amnesty but also advocated a barrier on the border. Rep. Lincoln Davis, who co-chairs a committee of Blue Dog Democrats exploring solutions to the immigration question, told a townhall meeting in Fairfax, Tennessee that any acceptable legislation must send



undocumented aliens to their countries of origin and must not contain the guest-worker program favored by the president. Of these Democrats, King says, "They're going to run from this thing and run fast."

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy explained to reporters that Republican support was indeed needed: "We're not going to waste time on something that the minority, they're going to shoot down." But that is just what border hawks in the House are hoping to do. "We're lining up. We'll use every strategy available to us," King said, including "floor speeches, strategically placed amendments, and cracking down on congressmen who can be turned away from this."

The timing of the legislation is just as important as the content. When asked whether the negotiations were stalled, Kennedy said, "It is the judgment of those who want the bill that the way we are following is the fastest way of getting the legislation. ... Obviously we have to consider it on the floor in May or no later than June." Senate aides from both sides of the aisle maintain that for an immigration bill to be passed, the August recess is the deadline. Otherwise, in the words of one observer, "presidential politics suck the oxygen out of the debate."

Though leadership in both parties would like to move immigration off the table as quickly as possible, the political stakes continue to mount, making compromise more difficult and gridlock more attractive. *Roll Call* neatly summed up the logic: "GOP and Democratic aides contend that both parties may be best served by a political impasse over the issue, since such a scenario would allow Members to show they are standing firm on the hot-button issue while avoiding compromises that may upset base voters." That outcome would enable Democrats to charge the GOP with obstruction and spare Republicans the wrath of anti-amnesty voters. ■

**Those who have harbored concerns that the new Democratic Congress would differ little from the Republican one on foreign policy have noted with dismay recent developments regarding Iran.**

On March 12, the Democratic Party leadership announced that it would decouple the issue of Iran from consideration of funding measures for the troop surge in neighboring Iraq. Opponents of possible military action directed against Iran sought specific language in the appropriation that would deny funding for military operations outside Iraq without prior congressional approval. The proposal seemed reasonable enough given the Bush administration's track record on the use of force, but apparently that was not acceptable to some Congressmen and lobbyists.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, which was meeting in Washington for its annual conference, mobilized immediately, initiating an intensive lobbying campaign against the measure. AIPAC instructed its supporters to flood Congress with calls, adding that it is best to telephone just after lunchtime, when there are more staffers available to answer the phone. Democratic Caucus leader Rahm Emanuel, a congressman from Illinois who served in the Israeli Army, organized resistance to the measure from inside the House of Representatives, while Charles Schumer from New York did the same in the Senate. Emanuel promised that the offensive language would be dropped. The Democratic Party subsequently held closed-door meetings and decided to exclude Iran from the funding discussion because of "possible impact on Israel." Majority Leader Nancy Pelosi, under intense pressure from AIPAC, initially favored the linkage but reluctantly agreed that there was too much opposition to proceed. Congressman Gary Ackerman of New York stated that reluctance to be "taking things off the table" vis-à-vis Israel's security was the reason for the decision, especially "if you're trying to modify their behavior and normalize it in a civilized way." Ackerman's belief that a possible nuclear first strike is the height of civilized demeanor might be disputed, particularly as the lack of any legislative hurdle empowers the White House and gives it *carte blanche* to attack Tehran. Congresswoman Shelley Berkley of Nevada, citing "widespread fear in Israel about Iran," provided a groundbreaking definition for the word "negotiating," adding that the threat of an impromptu attack on Iran is the "most important negotiating tool that the U.S. has..."

Separate bills introduced by Democratic Sen. Jim Webb and by Republican Congressman Walter B. Jones that would forbid military action against Iran without congressional approval are meanwhile languishing due to a lack of co-sponsors, while the mainstream media is also continuing to do its bit on Iran, as it did in the lead-up to Iraq. Senator Webb's legislation, accompanied by a lengthy floor speech, was tabled on March 5, but it was not reported by either "newspaper of record," the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*. Neither newspaper would respond to queries as to why Webb was considered unworthy of mention. And neither Webb nor Jones is receiving any support from their respective political parties in their efforts to stop another catastrophic war of choice.

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# The Starbucks Delusion

Consumerism isn't guaranteed to turn China democratic.

By James Mann

A FEW YEARS AGO, *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof gave voice to one of the most common American misconceptions about China's political future. It was June 2004, the 15th anniversary of the Tiananmen massacre, and Kristof was reflecting on how China had progressed and where it was headed.

The hardliners within the Chinese Communist Party leadership who supported the use of force by the People's Liberation Army in 1989 had been right about one thing, Kristof asserted—Western investment in China would bring a desire for “bourgeois” democratic freedom. “They knew that after the Chinese could watch Eddie Murphy, wear tight pink dresses and struggle over what to order at Starbucks, the revolution was finished. No middle class is content with more choices of coffees than of candidates on a ballot.”

Kristof was trying to say something he thought was obvious based on recent history elsewhere: once Chinese people get enough money to spend on consumer goods and the other attributes of middle-class life, they will push for a democratic political system.

But will they? Will the newly enriched, Starbucks-sipping, apartment-buying, car-driving denizens of China's largest cities become the vanguard for democracy in China? Or is it possible that China's middle-class elite will fail to embrace calls for a democratic China or even be a driving force in opposition?

The storyline that Americans envision has a simple logic: (1) China is now run by the Communist Party. (2) China has

an emerging middle class. (3) Eventually, these two forces will collide with each other, and the middle class will force the Communist Party to give way to democracy.

Such a narrative leaves out many complexities. It omits mention, for example, of China's rural peasants, its urban workers, and the millions of migrants now living in Chinese cities. And it overlooks the critical impact that these groups may have on China's middle class and its attitudes toward democracy.

Kristof embraced the conventional wisdom that democracy will come to China “in roughly the same way that democracy infiltrated South Korea and Taiwan.” But China does not depend for its security upon the United States, which at crucial moments during the 1980s pressed hard for an opening to democracy in both Taiwan and South Korea. And China is geographically much larger than Taiwan and South Korea; it has a vast interior that is not tied to the intellectual and political trends of the East Asian coastal areas. Moreover, China's urban middle class is a tiny proportion of the country's overall population—far smaller than in Taiwan or South Korea.

The old rural-urban ratio in the era of Mao Zedong was roughly four peasants in the countryside for every one urban resident. Now that rural-urban ratio is less—roughly two to one—primarily because of the movement of peasants to the cities. But the significance of this imbalance is the same: if China were to

have nationwide elections, and if peasants were to vote their interests, the urban middle class would lose. On an electoral map of China, cities like Shanghai, Beijing, Tianjin, and Guangzhou might look like the small gold stars on the Chinese flag; they would be surrounded by a sea of red. Add together the population of China's ten biggest cities, and you get roughly 62 million people, only 5 percent of China's overall population of 1.3 billion.

The emergence of China's urban middle class is far more significant when measured against the rest of the world than it is as a proportion of China's overall population. If you are a multinational company trying to sell soap or cars, the rapid rise in spendable income in China's largest cities is of staggering importance. However, the mathematics changes when we turn from marketing to democracy. When it comes to any national elections, that new Chinese middle class is merely a drop in the bucket. Those in the avant-garde in Chinese cities have every reason to fear that in nationwide elections they would be outvoted.

In addition, China's urban residents have an even greater reason to fear democracy: the Chinese Communist Party has not been evenhanded in its treatment of urban residents vis-à-vis peasants. Its policies have strongly favored the cities over the countryside. As China has switched from centralized planning to markets, opening up its economy to the outside world, and as the economy has responded with remarkable rates of growth, urban residents have gotten richer. Those in the

countryside have not done nearly so well. This is why there has been a wave of protests in the countryside, arising out of land seizures, local taxes, disputes over village elections, and similar controversies. And it is also why the Chinese regime has been, in recent years, particularly fearful of mass movements that might sweep the countryside and undermine Communist control. Looking at Falun Gong, Chinese leadership was haunted by a specter from the past: the Taiping rebellion that swept out of middle China in the 19th century and shook the Qing dynasty to its foundations.

In order to understand China's future, we need to develop a more sophisticated understanding of what keeps the political system going. What lies behind the Chinese Communist Party's monopoly on power and its repression of dissent? It is often said that the party and its 69 million members are clinging to their own power and privileges. This is part of the answer, but not all of it. As China's economy has thrived in recent years, strong economic and social forces have also emerged that will seek to protect the existing order and their own economic interests. The new middle class in Chinese cities is coming to favor the status quo nearly as much as the Communist Party does.

This suggests that there may be two different scenarios for a nondemocratic future in China. One is that the Communist Party will continue to hold on to power, with the backing of the urban elite. The second is that the Party might give up power, or be forced to do so, but would be replaced by a successor regime that also refuses to allow dissent or political opposition.

Why do we assume that if the Communist Party falls, what follows would necessarily be democracy? Suppose the Party proves over the next decade to be no better at combating the country's endemic corruption than it has been

over the past decade. Finally, public revulsion over this corruption reaches the point where the Chinese people take to the streets. China's leaders threaten to call in the army but realize that they can't rely on the loyalty of the officers or the troops, and so, sooner or later, the Communist Party gives way. Would the result be Chinese democracy? Not necessarily. China's urban middle class might choose to align itself with the security apparatus to support some other form of authoritarian regime, arguing that it is necessary to keep the economy running.

Americans have frequently formed their views of China on the basis of limited or skewed information. In the early 1970s, when the first groups of Americans began visiting China, they spent most of their time talking to Communist Party officials or the people they chose. These early visitors had little choice; their trips were controlled and their appointments restricted.

What the Americans saw and learned about China, then, was based almost entirely on what Communist Party lead-

wander around China virtually as they please. Yet despite all this increased contact and freedom of movement, Americans come home with a picture that is still skewed since they spend most or all of their time in the biggest cities and most of their interactions are with government officials, scholars, business managers, and museum guides.

For ordinary Americans, the inability to come to grips with China's one-party state is simply a matter of misperception: the illusions about the Taiwan-South Korea model for China, the overestimation of the role of the Chinese middle class. Among America's intellectual, political, and financial leaders, however, the dynamics are more complex. One finds a strong reluctance to challenge the status quo in China and a willingness to ignore or explain away China's continuing repression. One also finds a strong sympathy with China's leaders and their problems, despite the authoritarian nature of the system.

If you listen carefully to the public debate in the United States over China policy, you can sometimes detect a strain

## THE NEW MIDDLE CLASS IN CHINESE CITIES IS COMING TO FAVOR THE STATUS QUO NEARLY AS MUCH AS THE COMMUNIST PARTY DOES.

ers wanted outsiders to believe. During the Cultural Revolution, actress Shirley MacLaine was brought by party officials to talk to a Chinese nuclear scientist who had been sent out to the countryside. He told her that his work as a farm laborer growing tomatoes was as meaningful to him as learning how to split the atom. A few years later, she related this story to China's new leader, Deng Xiaoping, who told her, "He lied to you."

These days, visitors are able to see much more of China. While China's Ministry of State Security may still keep watch in the background, tourists can

of thought that might be called the Embattled Elites Equivalence and Commiseration School. It goes like this: The good guys in America and the good guys in China have to team up to fight opponents in both countries. There are critics in the U.S. who want tougher policies toward China, and there are hawks in China who seek tougher policies toward America. Let's join together against them.

All persons, both Americans and Chinese, are classified in simple terms according to their views on Sino-American relations. If they are in favor of close relations, then they are part of the same



team. If they seek to challenge the existing order for whatever reason, then they are on the opposing team, no matter whether they are Americans or Chinese and no matter what their particular views might be.

One corollary advanced in recent years is that leaders in China must deal with public opinion in their country, just as American leaders do. This proposition starts with a kernel of truth: public opinion is indeed a more significant factor in China than it used to be. Modern communications have made it easier to spread private opinions without going through the official press. Moreover, the Chinese Communist Party has at times resorted to stoking nationalist sentiments to shore up support for the regime, and whenever it does this, it runs a risk that those sentiments will spin out of control.

The problem comes with the next step: the suggestion that Chinese and American leaders are in the same boat because both have to deal with public opinion and domestic opposition to their policies. This glosses over the fundamental difference between the two political systems, one democratic and the other Leninist. The opposition that China's leaders worry about comes from within the Communist Party or the People's Liberation Army; other opposition is not permitted to exist, at least not in any organized way. When Chinese public opinion becomes troublesome for China's top leaders, they can rein it in by blocking websites and banning public demonstrations—as the regime did in the spring of 2005 when a wave of anti-Japanese demonstrations ventured a bit further than the leadership wanted.

The proclivity of American elites to refrain from public criticism of China's repressive system is reinforced all the more by the influence of money. There are huge financial incentives for prominent Americans to support the status quo.

U.S. political leaders know that if they become involved in dealing with China and don't become identified as critics of the regime, when they leave office they can move on to lucrative careers as advisers, consultants, or hand-holders for executives eager to do business in China. The career path was blazed by Henry Kissinger, who after stepping down as secretary of state set up a consulting firm and began escorting American bankers to Beijing.

An ever-increasing number of former officials have followed Kissinger's example. When the Clinton administration left office, National Security Adviser Samuel Berger set up a consulting firm, Stonebridge International, which gives advice and help on China. Like Kissinger, Berger sojourns regularly to China, where he meets with Chinese officials and is identified as the former national security adviser. "I'm a consultant to government and to business, in the political and economic spheres," Berger told China's state-run Xinhua News Service. "My two identities are like two hats, but they both play the role of bridge in the development of U.S.-China relations."

It would be unfair to single out Berger. Clinton's secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, formed the Albright Group, and his defense secretary, William Cohen, formed the Cohen Group. Both provide advice for companies eager to do business in China. Those seeking China advice with a more Republican cast can turn to Hills & Co., headed by former Trade Representative Carla Hills, the Scowcroft Group, run by former National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft, or, of course, Kissinger Associates.

Washington's leading law firms also recruit former cabinet members who have been involved in China policy and can claim, like Berger, to have the "two hats." During Clinton's first term, Mickey Kantor served as U.S. trade representative and commerce secretary. Then he

went off to a law firm, Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw, taking with him the two China specialists from the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative. Kantor's successor at the USTR, Charlene Barshefsky, negotiated China's entry into the World Trade Organization and, after Clinton left office, moved to another Washington law firm, WilmerHale, where she took charge of its China team.

In recent years, the allure of the China business has extended downward to ordinary civil servants. Twenty years ago, a China specialist who left the State Department, CIA, or Pentagon might go off to teach Chinese history or Mandarin at a university. Today, the more common career pattern is to hire on as a China specialist with a Washington law or consulting firm. Leading scholars on China, too, have discovered that they can make money on the side as consultants. When academics write op-ed pieces, testify in Congress, or take part in seminars, they are identified by their jobs at universities; rarely are the additional financial stakes in China business disclosed. To take one example, in news stories and op-ed articles, Kenneth Lieberthal is generally described as a University of Michigan specialist on China or former National Security Council aide. Rarely is it mentioned that he has also served as a senior director of Stonebridge International, Berger's consulting firm.

Many of America's think tanks also get sizable donations from companies that do business in China, and the donors seek to foster policies that will protect or augment their financial interests. The think tanks, in turn, issue reports supporting trade with China and other policies that favor the American business community.

The most flagrant example involves Maurice Greenberg, the former chairman and chief executive of American International Group, the first American insurance firm allowed into the People's

Republic after the Chinese revolution. Over the years, Greenberg has voiced sympathy for the Chinese leadership and has repeatedly belittled the idea that the United States should give emphasis to human rights or democracy in its policy toward China. "The histories and cultures of countries are vastly different, so it is unrealistic to expect China to have a political system that parallels any other," he wrote recently. These views would hardly be unique, except for the extraordinary role Greenberg has played in propagating them. He became a leading donor to the Council on Foreign Relations, the Asia Society, the Nixon Center (publisher of *The National Interest*), the Atlantic Council, and think tanks ranging from the liberal Brookings Institution to the conservative Heritage Foundation. At times, Greenberg aggressively sought to steer such institutions toward his own views of China policy. In one case, he wrote a letter threatening to cut off contributions to the Heritage Foundation after one of its specialists suggested that Congress delay a vote to grant permanent trading rights to China.

From the 1940s through at least the 1980s, many of America's leading scholars argued with cogency that American policy toward China was being improperly influenced by a web of money, business, and political connections in Washington. This network was originally called the "China lobby" when Chiang Kai-shek's regime was in power on the Chinese mainland; later, after the end of the Chinese civil war, it was often referred to as the "Taiwan lobby." Now there is a much larger, more powerful network operating in Washington in support of those who favor policies of "engagement" with China. Yet somehow, in the midst of this change, the scholars' old, legitimate concerns about the deleterious influence of money on policy have been muted.

The impact of this deluge of money has been to skew American discussions about China toward a pro-business viewpoint. One finds a set of recurrent ideas, themes, and attitudes. It doesn't describe the views of any particular individual; no one believes in the whole list. Rather, it's a composite sketch, a summary of countless conversations:

1. *China's top leaders (or whomever the prominent Americans have been granted access to on their latest visits) are wise but beleaguered.* They have the country's best interests at heart.
2. *Opponents of the regime should be viewed with skepticism, if not outright hostility.* Those who press for changes in China's one-party system are either self-serving or crazy. Political dissidents in the former Soviet Union or Eastern Europe were worthy of respect; those in China are far less worthy.
3. *There may be rampant corruption in China, but it is the result of unseen low-level officials.* It has nothing to do with the Communist Party or its monopoly on power.
4. *Repression and censorship in China should not be overemphasized.* Americans should seize upon any sign, however faint, of future liberalization. It is less significant that political opponents of the regime are thrown in jail than that China's leaders hint that they might change the political system at some indefinite point far in the future.
5. *Any tension between America and China is inherently bad and is the responsibility of the United States.* However, if the confrontation involves intellectual property rights or other U.S. commercial interests, then it is China's fault and is a legitimate issue that must be addressed immediately.

6. *Congress should be involved in China policy as little as possible.* Certainly, on other issues such as Iraq, presidential power is to be mistrusted, and we are in urgent need of greater legislative oversight. On China, the more the executive branch can do without congressional attention, the better.

7. *American public opinion is similarly dangerous.* Public attention should be diverted from arrests, censorship, or anything else that might raise questions about the nature of China's political system.

8. *What's happening on the ground in China today is whatever Chinese leaders tell visiting Americans is happening.* The turmoil you read about in the newspapers is remote and not to be taken too seriously, since it doesn't take place in the central districts of Beijing and Shanghai.

9. *Democracy would be harmful for China.* Or, alternatively, democracy would be okay for China, and the current leaders like the idea so much that they are planning to introduce it many decades from now—after we (and they) are all dead. Or, as a third alternative, democracy would be good for China, and even though the leadership is adamantly opposed to democracy, it's going to come to China inevitably anyway.

10. *The Chinese regime now enjoys widespread public support inside China.* The only reason the regime doesn't demonstrate this by holding an election is that ... it just doesn't.

Foreign investment in China brings in huge new sources of money to the emerging elites in major cities. It enriches the consultants who provide advice to Western companies, the entrepreneurs who start up new businesses, and the Party cadres who approve loans or grant licenses. These elites need to keep

Chinese wage levels low so that the foreign investors keep flooding into China. They have an interest in repressing dissent so that the country looks stable to prospective investors. Needless to say, the Chinese business elites support perpetuating the existing state of affairs.

Similarly, American elites are content with the status quo. It enables American firms to shift operations to China, where labor costs are low and corporate leaders don't have to worry about independent trade unions.

To be sure, American and Chinese business elites do not always see eye to eye. American companies complain that their Chinese partners are ripping off their designs or diverting money from a joint venture. Chinese executives complain that Americans fail to understand China's culture or the intricate ways in which the system works. But these are disputes over business operations. In the larger sense, the Chinese and American elites share a common interest in the existing economic order, in which China serves as the world's low-wage, high-volume manufacturing center.

Thus it looks as if middle-class Americans are identifying with middle-class Chinese and that the Chinese will one day insist on a choice of political candidates the way they now select from a range of lattes. But look beneath the surface and you will find a troubling reality: the business communities of China and the United States do not harbor these dreams of democracy. Both profit from a Chinese system that permits no political opposition, and both are content. ■

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# Twilight Zone

Pass through the portal to the alternate reality of the War Party's propagandists.

**By Gregory Cochran**

I THINK ALMOST EVERYBODY has wondered what would have happened if they had made a different choice in life, taken a different path. If you didn't think of it by yourself, seeing "It's a Wonderful Life" a few hundred times has probably driven the point home by now.

Many authors have applied this idea to big turning points, writing about alternative histories in which Hitler won World War II (*Fatherland*) or the South won the Civil War (*Bring the Jubilee*). The notion may not be pure fantasy: the many-worlds interpretation of quantum mechanics suggests that these Worlds-of-If may really exist, although forever unreachable.

Or maybe not so unreachable. A very odd pattern of statements by prominent supporters and members of the Bush administration suggests that we may have some truly unusual visitors—literally out-of-this-world.

You see, the president and his associates keep referring to historical events that never happened, at least not as they did in the fields we know. And they keep referring to the same ahistorical events. Over and over, the secretary of state and the (now former) secretary of defense have referred to guerrilla warfare in Germany after the Nazi surrender. But there just wasn't any. You can't find it in the history books or in the memories of people who were there at the time. My uncle was in Bavaria in the summer of 1945: no trouble. Secretary Rumsfeld repeatedly talked about the similarities between

today's Iraq and America after the Revolutionary War, but again, I'm pretty sure that there aren't any. I don't believe we found tortured corpses in the streets of Philadelphia every morning back in 1784. And why does President Bush keep saying that Saddam refused to admit those UN arms inspectors back in 2002 and early 2003? Why did Condoleezza Rice, in 2000, say that Iran was probably backing the Taliban, when in fact the two had almost gone to war in 1998?

Now some might say that these statements were just talking points—that is, lies—but I sure wouldn't want to accuse anyone of lying. More to the point, there have been many ahistorical statements that are just strange and don't seem to advance any particular political agenda. For example, when President Bush said that the Japanese lost two carriers sunk and one damaged at the Battle of Midway (instead of losing all four, which is what actually happened), who gained? When POTUS said that Sweden has no army (it does), what political argument was advanced?

We're talking about the rulers of the most powerful nation on earth. It can't be that they're just pig-ignorant—of their own history, yet. There has to be a deeper, more subtle explanation.

We can learn more by examining these statements in detail, including those of the administration's close supporters. They too keep diverging from the history we know. Recently, Rep. Don Young of Alaska quoted Lincoln as saying,

“Congressmen who willfully take actions during wartime that damage morale and undermine the military are saboteurs, and should be arrested, exiled or hanged.” Lincoln never said that, of course. Cliff May, at *National Review*, said “President Roosevelt waited until after World War II to put in place a commission to investigate what mistakes led to Pearl Harbor.” Pretty fly for a dead guy: FDR passed on just before Germany surrendered, well before the Japanese quit. And anyhow, the first of many Pearl Harbor investigations—the Roberts Commission—started only 11 days after the sneak attack.

More and more, I get the feeling that Bush and his friends come from one of the Worlds-of-If—a sad place, even worse than the one we actually live in, a world in which their odd statements are true.

When tired or stressed, they refer to the history that they lived and learned in school. But their briefing books recount an alternate history in which Iraq in 2002 was not a poor and backward country but the coming threat, as our Germany was in 1938. A history in which America, after the Revolution, was a flaming cesspool like Iraq today, a world in which Lincoln executed unruly legislators. One in which World War II dragged on long after the indecisive Battle of Midway. One in which our occupation of Germany was plagued by guerrilla warfare. One in which we’ve been fighting World War IV with Iran and Syria for 25 years, as Jim Woolsey has repeatedly said. One in which a hostile Islamic Caliphate has bothered to go through the formality of coming into existence.

Close study of such statements might eventually give a rough sketch of that other world’s history. This would be of immense value, for it would allow us to learn much about the inner workings of the historical process, just as the discovery of a different kind of life on Mars would be an epochal event in biology.

The fact that a history that diverged from ours at least 200 years ago, judging from the differences in the Revolution, still bears some resemblance to ours—still had a battle of Midway, just not the same battle—suggests that unknown overarching forces constrain the course of events. But the story is never the same in detail.

The casual mention of World War IV strongly implies that these interlopers also had a World War III. They must have suffered greatly—maybe bombed out, likely short on resources such as oil. I would guess that those disasters irretrievably darkened their political perspective, just as our World War I left an entire generation embittered and disaffected. Certainly some kind of civilizational blight is needed to explain Vice President Cheney’s “Dark Lord” shtick.

**SOMEHOW THEY CAME HERE, SO THERE MUST BE A GATE OR PORTAL. JUDGING FROM THE SPATIAL CLUSTERING OF IDENTIFIABLE VISITORS, IT’S SOMEWHERE IN WASHINGTON, PROBABLY VERY CLOSE TO THE AEI BUILDING.**

Somehow they came here, so there must be a gate or portal. Judging from the spatial clustering of identifiable visitors, it’s somewhere in Washington, probably very close to the AEI building. Possibly inside. It may be an accident of nature, or it might be a scientific wonder used for judicial exile, just as bad Kryptonians were sent to the Phantom Zone. You have to wonder about that when you consider the kind of guys they’re sending.

If two-way transfer is possible, there could be vast business opportunities. There are reasons to suspect that science and engineering took a very different path over there: their limited understanding of nuclear weapons—they seem to think that nukes are roughly as easy to build as bottle rockets—suggests that nuclear fission may never have been

developed on their timeline. But even if they’re behind us in some areas, they’re likely to be ahead in others. I’d guess that they know far more about torture than we do. Practice makes perfect.

Even if they’ve never split the atom, they have much to offer. The very existence of such a portal is the most significant new scientific result in a century, far more important than any result expected from the most advanced accelerator. The sheer physical presence of Condoleezza Rice on this plane suggests, indeed demands, new physics that may lead to the long-desired marriage of quantum mechanics and general relativity. It’s either this or string theory.

Of course this means that we need to corral some or all of these visitors for study and experimentation. Such experiments would, I suppose, interfere with

their civil liberties, if they had any, but they’re obviously not citizens of these United States. Technically they’re illegal aliens. Gitmo’s a-waitin’.

And perhaps we can do more. Obviously this other world is in a sorry state and could stand some saving. They’re our closer-than-brothers—our other selves living in a world gone bad, a world in which the toast always falls butter-side down, a world where Mr. Potter owns the Building and Loan. Undoubtedly an irrepressible desire for freedom burns in every heart there. As soon as possible, we should begin preparing for their liberation.

It will be a cakewalk. ■

*Gregory Cochran is a physicist and evolutionary biologist.*



# Appointment in al-Adhamiya

With American forces on Baghdad's mean streets, frontline of the last chance

By Stewart Nusbaumer

BAGHDAD—"In the last 48 hours our route has not had many IEDs," Lieutenant Lao explains to his soldiers, a dozen standing next to his humvee. "But there has been a lot of small arms fire and grenades."

"But," in Iraq, is never good. The lieutenant's words were calm, but his facial muscles were tight. Not surprising since we're headed into one of Baghdad's most dangerous neighborhoods.

Three years ago—more than one year after the "shock and awe" invasion of Iraq—al-Jazeera reported: "In the crowded and winding streets of al-Adhamiya, a 1000-year-old Sunni locality of Baghdad, explosions from mortars and grenades and long volleys of machine gun fire break out every half hour. U.S. tanks rumble through narrow alleys, helicopters circle and fire on intersections with Gatling guns, and snipers scramble across the rooftops."

"Let's roll," Lieutenant Lao says, and the two humvees and two trucks of the 3rd Platoon, 510th Sapper Company, 20th Engineer Battalion rumble out of Camp Victory and into Baghdad. My first impressions of the city: Children mostly ignore our convoy, adults sneak fleeting glances. Bricks and garbage are scattered about, yet hardly a pothole exists on the almost deserted thoroughfare. Houses with peeling paint hide behind high concrete walls and heavy gates as their elegant palm trees stretch and spread into the clear blue sky. Lots of stores but only a small number are open. Iraqi checkpoints every few miles that the military vehicles roar past while the

occasional civilian car yields nervously. Without the heavy thunder of our military vehicles, there would be silence. An ominous lack of sound. Sometimes noise is good.

Yesterday, at his first press conference since becoming the commanding general of foreign forces in Iraq, Gen. David Petraeus said sorrowfully: "When I left [Iraq] 17 months ago, there certainly was not the kind of emptiness in some of the neighborhoods of Baghdad." He added that he was taken aback by what he saw—or did not see—when driving through al-Adhamiya.

We turn onto a narrow side street. The closeness of the buildings is unnerving; the sidewalks are deserted. "Electrical wires!" screams the lieutenant. The driver whips the humvee around three wires hanging from an overhead line. Ahead a lone man limps on crutches. In the distance, a U.S. helicopter flies near a column of thick black smoke. Helicopters travel in pairs, yet I see only one.

Our convoy of four vehicles squeezes into a heavily guarded compound—military vehicles packed tight, construction materials stacked high, American soldiers and Iraqi police walking briskly. It's the al-Adhamiya police station, home to a Joint Security Station that the U.S. military is building. At the far end of the blocked-off road and beyond the perimeter barricades is a colorful mosque. Its golden roof shimmers in the bright noon sun. The other buildings surrounding the compound are drab gray and pockmarked from gunfire.

Four years after the invasion, little has changed in al al-Adhamiya, except its dangerous streets are no longer crowded. Dangerous does not require crowded. In those same four years, much has changed for the United States: our war has traveled from overwhelming victory to bloody stalemate. Now the U.S. troops surge, about 30,000 with three-quarters headed for the convulsing capital of Baghdad. This is probably America's last chance in Iraq.

It's not unheard that stunning success in war leads to dismal failure in the next war. The roots of our national failure in Vietnam were probably laid in our victory in World War II. What is unusual about Iraq is that the next war came immediately—an asymmetrical war with small groups of guerrillas carrying out pinpoint attacks and disappearing into the urban landscape, evading, frustrating the massive firepower and technology of the world's most powerful military. Seldom has a spectacular battlefield victory evaporated so quickly.

Initially, the Bush administration denied an insurgency existed, blaming common criminals and disgruntled Saddamists for the upswing in violence. When sectarian violence exploded, the administration denied there was a civil war. Its "stay the course" mantra was a plea to continue denying reality. Yet using conventional troops to pursue a burgeoning, elusive insurgency and conventional tactics to battle an infectious civil war are foolhardy. Four years of wrong strategy has Baghdad teetering on the brink of some ghastly Middle Eastern Dante's Hell.

Inside the bustling compound of the al-Adhamiya police station, Staff Sergeant Cesar Ferrer growls out orders: set up the cots out back under the tin roof, get the tools and the MREs out of the vehicles, eat your chow, and then get to work.

"I got out of the Army," the stocky sergeant, who was born in Colombia, tells me in a surprising gentle voice. "I had to come back. Why? The guys! I really missed them." He thinks for a minute then says, "Half of them are from broken families; I'm a father figure to them."

Sound pulsates throughout the compound. Nails hammering into walls, drills humming, a saw slicing through a sheet of plywood, old desks and filing cabinets banging their way out of the

needs to be done, then they move on to another one.

"This is your project," Sergeant Ferrer patiently yet firmly tells a young soldier. "I will be here if you have any questions, but it's your baby." After the soldier leaves, the sergeant leans toward me and says, "It's important to help develop them." His eyes grow intense: "I love teaching these guys."

A sergeant, a father, a teacher, Cesar Ferrer balances each role naturally, shifting from one to the other quickly—a crucial asset for a military trained for conventional conflict but fighting an unconventional war, a military struggling to overcome four years of wrong strategy as it attempts to forge a new one.

will be built in Baghdad and will be manned by both Iraqis and Americans. They will have satellite combat outposts, establish neighborhood checkpoints, guard marketplaces, and conduct local patrols.

"We've been here only three days," says Captain Gillman of the al-Adhamiya Joint Security Station. "Our job will be to co-ordinate between Iraqi police and Iraqi army and coalition forces," he says, adding that each will have a desk in the operations room. The captain invites me back next month, "when we're fully operational."

As night descends upon al-Adhamiya, new sounds come out—an exploding grenade, shrapnel peppering the tin roof above our heads. Numerous booms rattle the neighborhood—probably IEDs spreading horror. Small arms fire, cracking single shots and multiple round bursts. Morning reveille is a mortar round crashing on to the edge of the compound. The streets of al-Adhamiya may be empty, but the neighborhood air is full of sounds.

Today will bring more sounds of construction, as General Petraeus's plan to subdue the insurgents continues to be built. But tonight will bring the sounds of another plan. I will return next month and listen to the sounds. For four years al-Adhamiya has not changed, but maybe it's not lost. I will let you know what I hear. ■

*Stewart Nusbaumer is embedded with Army and Marine units in Iraq.*

## AS NIGHT DESCENDS UPON AL-ADHAMIYA, NEW SOUNDS COME OUT—AN EXPLODING GRENADE, SHRAPNEL PEPPERING THE TIN ROOF ABOVE OUR HEADS.

building as a half-dozen bombed and crashed Iraqi police vehicles are towed out of the compound. Smoke from burning trash irritates eyes, itches throats. Amid all the racket and hacking, soldiers attempt to sleep, since they will spend their night erecting the high security walls.

Although trained as combat engineers to clear minefields, dig tank trenches, and blow up bunkers, the soldiers of the 510th Sapper Company are doing basic construction work. "That's today's Army," Sergeant Ferrer cracks. With a smaller military, and one enmeshed in a nasty irregular war, soldiers are being cross-trained, sometimes simply thrown into new jobs. Armor units are performing infantry work, artillery companies are doing civil affairs, and former bunker busters are installing electrical lights. The Sappers work for a few days at a new Joint Security Station wiring fixtures, building walls, doing whatever

General Petraeus, an early critic of the military's conventional strategy and now the U.S. commander in Iraq, has a plan that borrows heavily from classical counterinsurgency theory. He wants to shift the primary focus from killing insurgents to winning the support of the people. Defeating an entrenched insurgency requires the active support of the populace. American troops need to live closer to the people, in their neighborhoods. "Iraqi and coalition forces will not just clear neighborhoods," he says. "They will also hold them to facilitate the build phase of the operation and help Baghdad's residents realize aspirations beyond survival." With neighborhoods secure, he hopes government services can be restored, commerce will return, public confidence will grow, and Iraq will evolve into a stable and prosperous country.

Crucial for implementing the plan are the Joint Security Stations. Nearly 40

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# Flowers for the Liberators

Five years after beating back the Taliban, rampant corruption and the persistence of the poppy economy make victory in Afghanistan elusive.

By Jason Motlagh

IN THE SHADOW of the Iraq misadventure, the Taliban has mounted a brazen comeback in the badlands of Afghanistan. Hostilities have intensified each year since they were ousted five years ago, with even heavier fighting expected in the coming months. Their resurgence is largely a symptom of the sluggish pace of reconstruction, hamstrung when Washington diverted critical money and manpower to Iraq. And the Bush administration's latest military budget, in which Congress is asked to approve \$11.8 billion to fortify Afghan security and development—out of some \$624.6 billion overall—appears to be more of the same.

But remarkably, this sum amounts to about two-thirds of all defense spending in Afghanistan since the U.S.-led invasion, indicating that administration officials have at least come to acknowledge the high cost of a short attention span. Another 3,500 American troops may also be on their way to reinforce the existing 26,000 on the ground as the Taliban's spring offensive heats up. Still, no amount of shotgun aid can salvage the original mission in the war on terror unless another, more integral factor is confronted: corrupt officials.

While Taliban fighters staging attacks from bases along the lawless border with Pakistan erode the fringe, too many Afghan officials—from Kabul to Kandahar, senior ministers down to local beat police—sabotage the country from the inside. U.S. and European defense officials have already conceded that at

least half of all Western aid to Afghanistan does not reach those who need it. The U.S. Agency for International Development spent over \$3.5 billion on sectors ranging from transport infrastructure to agriculture between 2000-05. But former Interior Minister Ali Jalali estimates only 30 percent was ultimately spent on aid projects. President Hamid Karzai's Anti-Corruption and Bribery Office has operated for over two years with a staff of some 140 people and has yet to make a single conviction. On a recent trip, one senior-level Afghan minister told me that most everyone inside the system knows whose hands are dirty, but no one dares speak out in such a fragile climate.

Karzai's supporters argue that deep-seated factionalism and the fledgling state of government institutions demand unsavory associations to keep the country, or at least the capital, intact. Critics counter that Karzai has jeopardized the government by appointing ex-warlords and other players with shady backgrounds. One such critic is former Interior Minister Jalali, who resigned two years ago after publicly complaining that his power to fire dishonest provincial officials was curtailed. Jalali went on to suggest that he might reveal the names of those officials involved in Afghanistan's booming drug trade, which now accounts for nearly 90 percent of the world's heroin and goes a long way to explaining the incongruously lavish residences around the capital.

President Karzai got it right when he said, "If we fail to eradicate the poppy, the poppy will eradicate us." He wasn't just referring to the dangers of drug addiction. Last year, Afghanistan boasted a record poppy harvest—up 60 percent from the year before—that accounted for about half of gross domestic product thanks to trafficking networks that hustle the top export to Europe and beyond. None of this could happen without a reliable degree of official complicity. According to a damning new UN/World Bank report, drug-related corruption has severely undercut efforts to combat opium production. It is most problematic at the district level; in poppy-growing districts, police chief posts with \$60 monthly salaries are said to have gone to bidders paying as much as \$100,000.

Officials then extract heavy bribes from wealthier producers. Farmers who cannot pay are forced into debt once their crops are destroyed by slash-and-burn teams. The report notes that faced with intimidation or even death if they fail to repay outstanding debts, some are compelled to replant poppies once authorities have moved on—or face the consequences. Governors and police officials on the take are also known to drive out competing cartels in exchange for extra kickbacks, forging alliances of convenience with anti-government elements.

Aggressive U.S.-pressured drug eradication efforts have compounded the problem. Today, the average Afghan

survives on less than \$200 a year. For most of the rural population, the high hopes that attended the fall of the Taliban government in late 2001 are strained to the point of cracking by a lack of promised security and basic services. The Taliban razes schools at the rate of nearly one per day. Roads are unsafe, and health care is as scarce as decent jobs. Those who turn to poppy cultivation know their only source of income could at any time be wiped out. Meanwhile, crooked officials operating above the law stand to make profits one way or the other: if crops are destroyed, the value of the dope they take a percentage from increases; otherwise it's business as usual. Says Robert Templer, Asia Program director for the International Crisis Group, "Money put into [poppy eradication] so far has been thrown away. [Drugs are] an enormous, almost insoluble problem, and remain absolutely corrosive to efforts to build up institutions."

As long as officials continue to profit at their expense, scores of alienated farmers will be driven into the arms of the Taliban. Four years ago, the Taliban operated in squad-sized units. Three years ago, they grew to company-sized units of 100-plus fighters. Last year, they ballooned to battalion-sized units of 400-plus fighters that engaged 30,000-strong NATO forces in pitched gun battles, reported retired Gen. Barry R. McCaffrey, a former U.S. drug czar, following his second fact-finding mission to Afghanistan. Violence has been reported in 32 of the country's 34 provinces. Not surprisingly, it is worst in southern Helmand province, home to 42 percent of total poppy cultivation in 2006. Drug cartels operate at will in the region, giving a cut of profits to Taliban commanders in exchange for protection, which in turn allows them to pay militants about four times what Afghan National Army

troops earn. By some estimates, rural farmers stand to make more than six times what they receive for time-intensive crops like wheat.

One NATO commander figures that up to 70 percent of the population in the southern region is "on the fence" over whether to support the Taliban or the government. Taliban leaders have said they will fight for as long as it takes to vanquish foreign "occupiers," and more and more Afghans appear convinced the black-turbaned militants will follow through, even if it takes another 10 to 15 years. In fact, the largest-ever opinion survey financed by USAID showed that

To meet international standards of transparency, Crisis Group has recommended requiring new appointees to declare annual assets, which would be reviewed by the National Assembly and made available to the public. This would be accompanied by a monthly presidential review of investigations in progress with the heads of anti-corruption agencies and legal action when necessary, without regard to status. Because the lion's share of U.S.-European aid to Afghanistan filters down through the Interior Ministry to conduct projects and to pay civil servants and police officers, an external task force with the mandate

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one-fifth fewer Afghans now believe the country is moving in the right direction compared to those polled after the 2004 elections. Corruption was one of the top grievances against the state.

From the restive provinces back to the center, the Karzai government is in the throes of a legitimacy crisis. If Afghanistan is to have a chance at stability in the years ahead, state institutions need a thorough overhaul, none more than the Interior Ministry. Responsible for setting budgets and appointing district police and governors throughout the country, the ministry is an ill-reputed bastion of greed and graft. Faced with a steady stream of complaints, last year the government set up its own oversight mechanism to better filter appointees, but it will be difficult in the long run to ensure their honesty on meager salaries that make drug profiteering tempting. It is also hard to staff police in lonely southern and eastern outposts where the Taliban is active.

to dispense aid in step with Afghan government reforms is also critical—especially with billions more American taxpayer dollars in the pipeline.

A forceful anti-corruption drive might kick off with a high-profile prosecution of a few marquee offenders to show that a new policy is in effect. Afghanistan has a highly centralized system that has often been faulted for its weakness in the provinces, but this may prove to be an advantage as housecleaning in Kabul decapitates corrupt networks and lines of patronage. Before this can happen, however, the judiciary must be overhauled to restore confidence among Afghans fed up with verdicts-for-sale. Frustration over kangaroo courts throughout the country has led some tribal leaders to demand a return to strict Islamic law, akin to the Taliban reign that was at once harsh and effective. A new supreme court was sworn in last August, but developing a transparent legal system complete with capable



judges and lawyers is not an overnight project. In the meantime, the Karzai government could find ways to better integrate customary judicial practices to connect influential religious leaders to the center.

The Bush administration, for its part, also has a chance to atone for past mistakes in Afghanistan. The latest budget request, buttressed by the recent appointment of an American four-star general, suggests the country's fate is now considered a long-term strategic priority. One major flaw persists, though: security spending trumps reconstruction aid by about \$4 to \$1, a sign that counterinsurgency strategists remain overly focused on killing Taliban when they should be trying to win over the grassroots support that fuels the enemy. And instead of Plan Colombia-style counternarcotics measures that hit the desperate hardest, more should be spent on targeting drug trafficking networks that operate in lawless areas, where drug labs and smuggling routes carve the terrain.

Graft lurks as a spoiler. Unless Washington's power of the purse is used to leverage President Karzai to reform institutions, ugly trends will continue. Rather than targeting the poor, key violators that poison his government's integrity right under his nose need to be purged as if they were on the payroll of the Taliban itself. This would have the effect of spreading good faith among disillusioned, scared Afghanis, along with skeptical Western donors whose generosity can ill-afford to run dry. The antidotes to insurgency are basic quality of life improvements, anchored by rule of law. It is high time both were ensured by an Afghan government deserving of the people's trust. ■

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# Ant Farm

Inflating a disorganized menace into a global predator elevates al-Qaeda and imperils us.

**By James L. Payne**

OVER FIVE YEARS HAVE PASSED since the 9/11 attacks, and we still cannot agree on how to handle the problem of terrorism. In order to have a strategy, you have to decide what kind of enemy you face, and thus far we don't have a clear idea of the opponent.

To focus this issue, it is useful to draw on an analogy from the animal kingdom. Admittedly, using analogies is a rough way to elucidate reality, but considering where sober and official theories of terrorism have led us, perhaps we can profit from an unorthodox perspective.

Traditionally, foreign enemies have resembled lions: large beasts with a definite home base, capable of destroying us and capable of being destroyed by us. Hitler was lion-like. So was Stalin. So was Mao. These enemies had huge, multi-million-man armies that could invade and occupy other countries. They were centralized actors with one brain, so to speak. They could focus their military power on making political demands, such as a change in our leadership. Conflicts with them were life or death struggles.

These enemies were lion-like in another way: they were prudent actors, concerned with the survival of their regimes. Thus they adjusted their aggression according to the probability of a strong reaction. Because these lion-like enemies were watching us for signs of strength or weakness, we learned that appeasement is dangerous, and security lies in strength.

Does this traditional perspective on foreign policy serve us in the battle against terrorism? A close look shows that terrorism—that is, the terrorism of Islamic radicals—is an un-lion-like enemy in almost every respect. To begin with, terrorism does not have a home country. Terrorists can be recruited anywhere in the world from the pool of a billion Muslims. Although you can kill or capture individual terrorists, there is no way to win a war against terrorism.

Just as we cannot destroy terrorism, terrorism cannot destroy us. Islamic radicals specialize in shocking people and—with the aid of the media—they do this very well. But they do not have the capacity to invade and govern any Western country. Osama bin Laden has no army that could march into Cleveland and impose Sharia.

The Islamic radicals are not a single, unified organization capable of making demands and keeping bargains. They include scores of groups with no common platform of political objectives. Nor are they prudent planners like the lion-like enemies of the past. They are emotional and easily give in to hatred. They can be provoked by trivial, symbolic incidents—cartoons in a distant newspaper, a few enigmatic lines in a pope's speech. Their ready use of suicide reflects their mentality. Radical leaders do not view suicide attacks as the tragic destruction of one of their own true-believing comrades, to be undertaken only after grave and careful

deliberation. Violence is seen as an intoxicating tactic, attractive even if it brings a trivial result.

The radicals overlook that their acts of gratuitous violence alienate moderate Muslims and increase the resistance of their enemies. And they seem unconcerned with consolidating their victories. In Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden had a chance to build the kind of Muslim fundamentalist state he is supposed to cherish, yet he threw it away by provoking the U.S. with the 9/11 attacks.

The radicals' proclivity for dispute and violence leads them to divide into factions ready to fight and kill each other for almost no discernable reason, as we see in the recent battles between Hamas and Fatah in Palestine. The idea that these temperamental rabble-rousers could carry out a sustained program of world domination is beyond plausibility.

In no important respect, then, does Islamic terrorism resemble a lion. We need to look about the forest for another kind of animal in order to make sense of this disjointed, irascible enemy. In my opinion, it's ants.

Ants specialize in shocking people; indeed, they seem to be programmed to attack even when it does them no good at all. You can't deter ants, you can't reason with them, you can't bargain with them. And no matter how many individual ants you kill, you can never defeat them because the forest has an infinite supply.

Though you can't win a war against ants, neither can they defeat you. They can sting and cause injury, but their bites are not fatal, at least not directly. Indirectly, ants can cause death if the victim reacts irrationally—for example, if the stinging goads him to jump off a cliff.

Does the analogy still hold if the ants can employ nuclear weapons? That certainly would make the ant bites more painful, but it doesn't change the charac-

ter of the threat. A nuclear explosion may—or may not—do greater damage than a conventional attack, but it would not translate into a military victory for the terrorists. They could not occupy territory or transform U.S. institutions any more than they could after 9/11.

It might help steady our thinking if we realized that terrorism is not a functional military campaign designed to take objectives and impose outcomes. It is more akin to a natural disaster like an earthquake or an influenza epidemic. Natural disasters are painful, but they do not change values or leadership. In Indonesia, the December 2004 tsunami left a toll of 236,000 dead and missing. After that disaster, Indonesia went on with the same rulers and the same institutions.

Employing nuclear weapons, the radicals might cause a similar disaster in the United States, but it would not

The ant analogy also points us in a useful direction for limiting the incidence of terrorism. The principle here is that stomping on or near an anthill is the surest way to stir up trouble.

As just noted, Islamic radicals have a shallow, emotional perspective. They are not sophisticated about political philosophy or foreign affairs, but they respond in defense of their territory when it is threatened. When they see the United States attempting to direct the destiny of Muslim countries, it excites them. Never mind that this U.S. intervention is well intentioned; never mind that most of it is futile. Just the act of trying to throw our weight around in that area stimulates radicals to a frenzy of opposition.

Hence, the most important move the United States can make to diminish Islamic terrorism is to step back from its involvement in the Middle East. Those

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change our culture, traditions, or ideals. We would pick ourselves up, rebuild, and carry on as before. The more lasting injury stemming from such a tragedy would be self-inflicted if we gave into a hysterical overreaction. We might, for example, be impelled to invade and occupy half a dozen countries in an attempt to exact revenge.

The ant analogy for terrorism suggests that the first principle for dealing with this diffuse, emotional enemy is not to overreact, not to do more harm to yourself than the ants can do to you. Patience is the watchword in grappling with terrorism.

who think that all foreign enemies are lions will call this a policy of appeasement and say that the best way forward is to show resolve by increasing our political and military involvement in the region. So you see, it makes a difference which kind of animal you think terrorism is. ■

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# Arts & Letters

## FILM

[*The Wind that Shakes the Barley*]

### The Pluck of the Irish Rebels

By Steve Sailer

Neoconservatives who extol Winston Churchill's adamancy never mention that in 1921, after Britain suffered no more than 700 army and police deaths in Ireland, he played a key role in negotiations with insurgents that resulted in Britain suddenly cutting and running from southern Ireland after 700 years of occupation.

Why did the UK, which sent 20,000 Tommies to their deaths on the first day of the Battle of the Somme a half decade earlier, not stay the course in Ireland? Ken Loach's film about Irish Republican Army gunmen in 1920-22, "*The Wind that Shakes the Barley*," which won the top prize at the 2006 Cannes festival, graphically conveys why the English, a civilized people, went home. Defeating a guerrilla uprising broadly supported by the local populace requires a level of frightfulness that does not bear close inspection.

Loach, the 70-year-old English movie director, is an old-fashioned lefty of the didactic Marxist sort. His films include "A Contemporary Case for Common Ownership" and "Which Side Are You On?" Not surprisingly, these haven't made him a big name in America, but "*Barley*" is worth a watch. Loach is neither the most fluid of filmmakers nor the

most historically trustworthy, but "*Barley*" is consistently informative about the Anglo-Irish War, if spectacularly wrongheaded about the subsequent Irish Civil War among the victors.

In recounting the history of a rebellion, with its endless alternations of terrorism and reprisal, you have to start the story at some particular incident, which inevitably biases your allocation of blame. Loach's sympathies are heavily with the IRA, the more radical the better, so he begins in 1920 when the Black and Tans (tough demobbed British WWI vets sent to Ireland to augment the police but given little appropriate training) rough up some fine Irish lads enjoying a game of hurling, killing a boy for the crime of speaking only Gaelic.

If he wanted to be more evenhanded, Loach could have commenced the previous year when the IRA began attacks on the Royal Irish Constabulary, necessitating the dispatching of the Black and Tans.

Or then again, he could have begun with any date going back to 1167, when the first English soldiers arrived. Compared to England, the Emerald Isle was smaller and rockier, so less populated. It was also more chaotic—no national king ever emerged—leaving it at its neighbor's highly limited mercy until its sons could win their freedom.

"*Barley*" tells of two fictional County Cork brothers, Damien, a doctor (played by Cillian Murphy), and Teddy, a natural leader of fighting men (portrayed by Padraic Delaney), who withstands having his fingernails ripped out without spilling the IRA's secrets. (Unfortunately, the Cork accents are so impenetrable for the first half hour that I didn't realize until the end of the movie that they are brothers.)

The brothers roughly represent, transformed to merely a local scale, those initial partners and eventual enemies in Irish revolution, Éamon de Valera, the math professor turned future president, and Michael Collins, the postman turned general.

Murphy, the dark-haired young actor from Cork with the alarming cheekbones and oddly pale blue eyes, is best known as the villain in "*Batman Begins*." His looks make him easy to pick out in a crowd of Irishmen, which is useful since Loach doesn't adequately distinguish between the supporting characters. When an IRA man tremulously announces after a firefight with the Black and Tans that "Gogan's dead!" it's not as moving as Loach intends because we had never gotten straight in our heads that Gogan was alive in the first place.

Murphy's skull-like head and intense eyes (he'd make an ideal Lenin) become more suited to the role of Dr. Damien as the healer turned killer, a Hibernian Che Guevara, grows ever more fanatically radical. He denounces his brother for supporting the compromise peace that Collins brokered with Churchill and David Lloyd George and demands that the Irish guerrillas, with their 3,500 rifles, fight the entire British Empire to the death in the name of socialism. (Loach's better dead than not red mind-set perversely mischaracterizes the stance of the anti-treaty fighters led by the deeply Catholic de Valera.)

In Loach's worldview, a resemblance to Lenin is to be cherished, but less bloodthirsty viewers will increasingly sympathize with Damien's brother Teddy, the man of violence who chooses peace for his people but at a terrible price to his family. ■

Not rated, but would be R for language and torture.

## BOOKS

*[Commander in Chief: How Truman, Johnson, and Bush Turned a Presidential Power into a Threat to America's Future, Geoffrey Perret, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 436 pages]*

# The Pleasure of the President

By Thomas E. Woods Jr.

I SUSPECT THAT the title of Geoffrey Perret's excellent new book was the work of his publisher. The reader will not find here an evaluation of the Constitution's commander-in-chief clause, followed by example after relentless example of its expansion or distortion, or even a conclusion that wraps up the story and ties the experiences of these three presidents together.

Yet this book is none the worse for all that. This is a chronicle of half a century of presidential supremacy, told primarily through the presidencies of Harry Truman, Lyndon Johnson, and George W. Bush, that reads more like a novel than a dissertation. And although Perret obviously considers Bush the worst of the lot, the history this book imparts suggests that we've been through it all before—the recklessness, the stupidity, the bull-in-a-china-shop foreign policy.

It is interesting to evaluate some of the earliest Cold War claims that emanated from Washington in light of the barrage of Pentagon and White House propaganda to which Americans have been subject since the Iraq War. Our recent experience is not such an anomaly after all. We now know that the extent of the Soviet threat around 1950 was far less severe than Americans were led to believe and that American officials trumped up the threat in order to secure the congressional appropriations they wanted. In a telegram of March 1, 1948, for example, U.S. ambassador to

the Soviet Union Walter Bedell Smith told Secretary of State George Marshall, "Full information and explanation to our own Congress of significance of recent Soviet moves in Czechoslovakia and Finland may result in speeding consideration and adoption of universal military training and building programs for Army, Navy, and particularly Air Force." "The next day," writes Perret, "a full-blown war scare was put together over lunch by Marshall and Secretary of Defense [James] Forrestal."

Meanwhile, the director of the CIA was reporting, "We do not believe that this event [consolidation of Soviet control over Czechoslovakia] reflects any sudden increase in Soviet capabilities, more aggressive intentions, or any change to current Soviet policy and tactics." Marshall ignored him.

Yet even Marshall himself, who seized upon the incident as evidence of aggressive Soviet intentions, privately conceded, "In the last three years Czechoslovakia has faithfully followed the Soviet policy. ... A communist regime would merely crystallize and confirm for the future previous Czech policy."

Gen. Lucius Clay, who oversaw the American zone of occupation in Germany and commanded U.S. forces in Europe, obligingly provided a telegram, whose contents he did not believe for a single moment, that in light of this event, war with the Soviet Union "may come with dramatic suddenness." The head of Army intelligence had asked Clay to issue such a statement in order to grease the skids for the reinstatement of the draft, which Congress was then resisting.

*Commander in Chief* does contain an excellent if brief discussion of presidential war powers and the framers' views on the subject. It also addresses the claim that even before Truman went to war over Korea in 1950, previous presidents had initiated military force countless times without congressional authorization and that Truman's behavior was therefore not all that unusual. In 1950, Dean Acheson and the State Department prepared a list containing scores of such alleged cases. "Nearly all were trifling

incidents in places from China to the Caribbean," Perret points out, "where Americans had got themselves into a jam and a corporal's guard of soldiers or marines got them out of it. Not one of them was, or even approached becoming, a major war. It was as spurious a document as Acheson ever concocted."

Perret goes on to say that the solution to Truman's dilemma—how could he justify sending so many Americans into a war so far away without congressional authorization?—was not going to be Acheson's list since "Congress and the press would never accept something so flimsy." Too bad Truman didn't live in the age of neoconservatism, in which shills for the state posing as intellectuals are all too happy to swallow something so flimsy, even waving these absurd "lists" triumphantly before all doubters of executive supremacy. (Max Boot actually tried to debunk the skeptical account of presidential war powers I included in my *Politically Incorrect Guide to American History* by citing Acheson's ridiculous and ahistorical claims against me.) He relied instead on a tendentious reading of Article II, Section 2 of the Constitution, which described the president as the commander in chief of the Armed Forces. For Truman, if not for the Framers, that clause covered a multitude of interventions.

With a title like *Commander in Chief: How Truman, Johnson, and Bush Turned a Presidential Power into a Threat to America's Future*, we might expect to read a little something about Truman's seizure of the steel mills, which he carried out during the Korean War in the name of the very "presidential power" that Perret's title warns us is a "threat to America's future." Yet not a word.

Equally surprising is something we do find: a chapter on Truman's support for Zionism and U.S. recognition of Israel, a sensitive issue Perret could have passed over in silence. Truman certainly employed executive vigor in recognizing the Jewish state immediately following its 1948 declaration of independence, despite the warnings of George Marshall and the State Department that premature



recognition—particularly when the boundaries of the two states envisioned in the United Nations' Palestine partition plan were still in flux amid the ongoing fighting between Arabs and Jews—could permanently alienate the Arab world, which had previously been friendly to the United States.

Perret describes some of the political pressures under which Truman acted, while conceding that the president's support for Zionism, when all was said and done, was genuine and sincere. For instance, House Judiciary Committee Chairman Emanuel Celler led a delegation of Jewish leaders to the White House for a meeting with Truman. He warned, "We have been talking to Tom Dewey. He is going to declare for a Jewish state and we are going to turn our money over and urge Jews to vote for him unless you beat him to it. And if you don't come out for a Jewish state we'll run you out of town." (Celler evidently misplaced his copy of the memo explaining that Jews, unlike the rest of the human race, never pressure politicians to enact policies on their behalf.)

Truman had high hopes for what the very existence of a Jewish state portended for the Middle East, Perret explains:

Zionists he had spoken to between his accession to the presidency and the creation of Israel convinced him that a Jewish state would represent liberal democracy in a poor and backward part of the world. Once it took root, that country would create sparks that jumped across frontiers, igniting a passion for change. The poor Arabs, downtrodden for a thousand years, would finally be free and prosperous. For the rest of his life Truman spoke proudly of his part in the foundation of Israel. You'll see, he liked to say, this is going to make the world a safer and happier place, spreading democracy from the Levant to the Gulf.

Space constraints prohibit lengthy treatments of any of the three presidents on whom Perret lavishes his attention,

but let it suffice to note that our author peppers his story with anecdotes. Johnson, for example, was not exactly out of character when he blurted, "I am the king!" after a moment's reflection in 1964 on the departure from the world scene of so many of the great statesmen of the age. LBJ's habit of pulling out his genitals in the presence of his critics as evidence of his greater manliness is well known, as is the incident when, in response to the nagging questions of journalists as to why American men were being sent to fight in Vietnam, LBJ finally showed them his penis and snapped, "This is why!" Less well known is the case of the member of the Secret Service who, standing next to the president, felt his leg getting wet. "You're pissing on my leg, Mr. President!" he exclaimed. "I know I am," LBJ replied. "That's my prerogative."

All three men claimed religious inspiration for their major decisions. Truman, explains Perret, had been convinced since 1920 that "God intended the United States to break with its isolationist past and assume the leading role in maintaining world peace. The League of Nations project had foundered to Truman's dismay, but with the end of the Second World War, he was certain that God's plan for America could finally be put into action." LBJ went much further, claiming that the Holy Ghost paid him visits: "He comes and speaks to me about two in the morning, when I have to give the word to the boys, and I get the word from God whether to bomb or not." For his part, George W. Bush once told a friend, "I believe God wants me to be president." "I'm driven with a mission from God," Bush later said to the Palestinian foreign minister. "He told me, 'George, go and fight those terrorists in Afghanistan.' And I did. And he told me, 'George, go and end the tyranny in Iraq.' And I did."

Oddly enough, Perret only rarely draws explicit comparisons among his three principal subjects, but we can surmise from his narrative what he thinks they have in common. They involved their countries in dubious foreign conflicts impetuously, they carefully sheltered themselves from unwelcome news

and analysis, and they risked the lives of Americans and foreigners alike in fits of pique, abandoning them to unwinnable wars out of fear of losing prestige or simply because they were too juvenile to admit a mistake. ("As a leader, you can never admit a mistake," Bush 43 once said.) In this kind of war, Perret argues, "the president, along with the country, is likely to abandon its ideals. It finds itself killing for the sake of killing, killing rather than admitting a mistake, killing for revenge, killing for anything but justice."

"These unwinnable wars," Perret concludes,

changed the presidency itself, by creating an over-mighty commander in chief, something the Founders thought they had precluded by ruling out a monarchy. As the character of the presidency changes, so does the character of the country. Large numbers of Americans now support torture, increasing restrictions on civil liberties, unprovoked attacks on other countries, and a president placing himself above the law by declaring, even as he signs a new law, that he will not be bound by that law's provisions.

Whether he realizes it or not, what Perret has produced here is not so much an analysis of the evolution of the commander-in-chief clause or an explicit, systematic look at presidential war powers and how they became so great. (What was Congress doing all this time in the face of growing presidential supremacy? We get very little sense here.) Instead, he has given us a superbly executed, compellingly written, and just plain interesting narrative of a half-century of presidential overreach. I yield to very few in my cynicism about American presidents, and yet even I found myself reacting in horror to the portraits that Geoffrey Perret paints of these three men—and the inability or unwillingness of any other major power center in American society or government to stand up and resist them. ■

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[*Eight Ways To Run the Country: A New and Revealing Look at Right and Left*, Brian Mitchell, Praeger Publishers, 161 pages]

## Beyond Red and Blue

By Paul Gottfried

IT SEEMS HIGHLY UNLIKELY that a mass commercial press would have published Brian Mitchell's study. Unlike those books on political theory and administration that turn up in my college mail, this volume is gracefully written, and it abounds in learned illustration from both European and American history. It is also conceptually original. Mitchell's book does not reprise platitudes about how we Americans have become a sharing-caring polity, with favorable references showered on public administrators and enlightened judges. The author investigates the opposing compass points in American political life, and he believes that these oppositions derive from the cultures and dispositions that are found in our society. In his analysis, he spares us such boilerplate as Republican equals "conservative" and Democratic "liberal." He goes well beyond journalistic simplifications in order to locate deeper patterns of political association. Above all, he tries to explain why certain ideological groups are able to make alliances with other ones, while they necessarily shun those whom they consider irreconcilably opposed to their deepest interests.

The most common approach to drawing these distinctions is to focus on preferential values and concerns. Those whom Mitchell calls "communitarians," typified by Hillary Clinton and social thinkers Amitai Etzioni and Michael Lerner, stress a combination of expressive freedoms and economic-political collectivism. Such communitarians hold positions that would keep them from uniting on just about anything with "paleolibertarians," that is, socially

traditionalist defenders of the free market who are critics of the welfare state. By contrast, communitarians could parley with socially leftist libertarians, a group identified with *Reason* magazine, on such issues as gay rights and granting amnesty to illegal aliens. They could also get along up to a point with neoconservatives in favoring laws against discrimination and in pushing a liberal immigration policy. By the same token, Left and Right libertarians should be able to do business on their shared interests, such as deregulating markets, reducing taxes, and favoring the decriminalization of certain victimless crimes. What determines which groups are reasonably compatible and which are not, according to the usual academic approach, is whether they have significant overlapping interests or shared values. If their worlds of discourse or political appeals in no way intersect, the groups are not likely to co-operate or even to treat one other respectfully.

Mitchell does not reject this model completely, but he provides a somewhat different interpretation of partisan interests. He offers a diagram of the "eight ways" that define the current political scene, from the standpoint of distinctive ideological perspectives. At the top of his circle are "right-leaning libertarians" and at the bottom are "left-leaning statisticians." The categories on the left side of the

shows why certain political positions are open to successful alliances because of the powerful partners whom they can draw in from their flanks. The neoconservatives can deal with both the Religious Right and the collectivist Left, depending on which programs they are pursuing. By contrast, the paleolibertarians are in a bad bargaining position, wedged in between anti-modernist paleoconservatives and radically anti-statist individualists. Mitchell also develops a useful contrast between *arx* and *kratos*, the first referring to authority that is not primarily coercive and the second to political power. (To his credit, Mitchell does not pretend that because of the generous franchise in the U.S., the shakedowns practiced by our government are somehow less pervasive than what goes on in less modern societies.) According to Mitchell, those groups that bear the "paleo" label cling to the now archaic belief in non-statist authority, whereas the closer one comes to the bottom of his circle, the more likely the partisan is to call for state coercion to deal with social issues.

A convert to Eastern Orthodoxy, Mitchell sometimes wears his religiosity on his sleeve. Certainly he does not aid his case by going after Protestants and the Protestant Reformation for "laying the axe to the root of the Church's archaic power, exalting the individual

### THE NEOCONSERVATIVES CAN DEAL WITH BOTH THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT AND THE COLLECTIVIST LEFT.

circle are anti-collectivist, going from "individualist" (or left-libertarian) through "radical" down to "progressive" and finally, at the bottom of the circle, to "communitarians." On the right side, proceeding upward from the communitarians, one finds first the neoconservatives, then the theoconservatives, and finally, the group closest to the paleolibertarians at the top, the paleoconservatives.

Despite the highly schematic nature of his presentation, Mitchell does flesh out the bare bones. He persuasively

against the church hierarchy and promoting a passionate repudiation of personal authority and subjection." Aside from the inaccurate attribution to the pre-Reformation Church of a purely spiritual power, untainted by worldly coercion, there is another mistake implicit in Mitchell's judgment. American Protestants, as a French Catholic visitor, Alexis de Tocqueville, noticed in the 1830s, offered a striking illustration of local authority based on real communities, with little or no public administration.

What makes the American descent into less and less restrained *kratos* particularly upsetting is that for centuries this was not our historic tradition.

But there is another, more critical problem with Mitchell's model. Although he does provide much food for thought, his scheme does not take into account the deep existing gulfs between particular ideological groups. Neoconservatives have enjoyed civil relations on occasion with Left libertarians and communitarians; they have had only shouting matches with the paleolibertarians and the paleoconservatives, whom they regard as racists and anti-Semites. Whether these charges are real or imaginary is not the question. What we are looking at is Mitchell's arrangement of partisan groups in such a way that one might be led to believe that neoconservatives and paleoconservatives are only divided by theoconservatives, whom Mitchell places in between them. The "individualists" at Cato Institute, moreover, often co-operate with neoconservative foundations, a situation that, according to Mitchell's scheme, should be unlikely given the differences between the groups, as indicated by where they are placed on his circle. Cato's relations with the paleolibertarian Mises Institute are far cooler and perhaps non-existent. The actual networking among partisan groups does not always correspond to the Mitchell's model of interests and values because people in the real world are guided by sentiments and associations that his model cannot fully reflect.

Mitchell may perceive this disconnect when he gets around to analyzing the theoconservatives. He observes common ground between them and the neoconservatives, which he traces back to a shared faith in "free enterprise but also an active role for government" and an "assertive use of American power in the world." "Both honor the founding fathers, American democracy, and America's immigrant identity," he writes. After enumerating other ties between theos and neos, Mitchell then raises the Zionist connection: "both are big fans of

Israel, albeit for different reasons. Neocons see no difference between the United States and Israel, while many Theocons see Israel as a key piece to the end-times puzzle."

But this enumeration of the reasons for the friendship comes after Mitchell has told us more interesting things about the theocons. Despite their "biblical and patristic teaching on the silence, veiling and subjection of women," they "raise their girls much like their boys, in co-ed schools that emphasize sports and careers for both equally." For all their complaints about "radical feminism," it was not they but the paleocon Phyllis Schlafly who took command in the successful campaign against the ERA. Ralph Reed, the former executive director of the Christian Coalition, tried strenuously "to assure Americans that the Religious Right did not want to turn back the clock." Both Reed and the best-known theocon columnist Cal Thomas invariably sound like neocons in their public utterances. Moreover, Reed "worked hard to align the Christian Coalition's agenda with GOP interests and to make allies of leading Neocons

Party of John Quincy Adams and the Whigs led by Henry Clay." This genealogy fails to incorporate the fears and loyalties of Eastern European Jews growing up in New York City in the early 20th century, who transformed their friend-enemy conceptions into a saleable vision of America's destiny. Political partisans (and here the "lower right" is not unique) may package their programs by appealing selectively to figures in the past. Paleoconservatives do it by creating a counterrevolutionary Thomas Jefferson, whose exuberant, onetime support of the French Revolution and references to natural right are swept under the rug. But serious historians should notice the difference between the mere packaging and the critical influences shaping partisan worldviews. Neoconservatives are imaginable without the pedigree bestowed by Mitchell, however flattering they may find their manufactured ancestry. Likewise, paleoconservatives would be opposing neoconservatives even if the ghost of the anti-Hamiltonian Jefferson were not there as an occasional point of reference. The confrontation between the

### PALEOCONSERVATIVES WOULD BE OPPOSING NEOCONSERVATIVES EVEN IF THE GHOST OF THE ANTI-HAMILTONIAN JEFFERSON WERE NOT THERE.

like William Bennett." In light of such illustrations of the Religious Right's submissiveness to neocon direction, how accurate would it seem to place the theocons exactly between the neocons and paleocons? Although there may be some theoretical justification for this practice, in reality it tells nothing about the way the groups in question function. Mitchell's most revealing remark about the leaders of the Religious Right is this: "In the aftermath of the Paleo/Neocon rift in the 1980s, the Theocons aligned themselves with the winner."

There is also diminishing profit in trying to explain the "lower right," that is, the neoconservatives, by tracing them back to "the party of Alexander Hamilton, the National Republican

two sides is taking place in the 21st century over points of contention that developed in the second half of the 20th. It is not a replay of the battles waged between Federalists and Jeffersonians in the 1790s.

Despite these objections, Mitchell's work deserves to be read by students of American politics. If a visitor coming from a different society requested a brief introduction to the American political landscape, I would suggest this text without hesitation. Mitchell tells us much about our political differences, as far as one can in a single brief book. ■

*Paul Gottfried is a professor of humanities at Elizabethtown College and the author of The Strange Death of Marxism.*

[George Mason: Forgotten Founder, Jeff Broadwater, University of North Carolina Press, 352 pages]

## Invisible Hand

By Kevin C. Gutzman

GEORGE MASON was the esteemed colleague of Virginia revolutionaries Thomas Jefferson and James Madison in the early days the Republic, but the foremost constitutionalist among the men who made America has largely been forgotten. Jeff Broadwater hopes to remedy this situation in his new book.

Anyone concerned with the proper ordering of the American politics would do well to acquaint himself with Mason. The master of Gunston Hall took the lead in writing the Virginia Constitution of 1776—the first of the American revolutionary constitutions and the first constitution in the history of the world written by the people's representatives.

Mason, who always considered himself a man of 1688—of the Glorious Revolution, which established the Protestant Succession in England and forever reduced the king to the subordinate of Parliament—prepared the way for the Virginia Constitution by penning the lion's share of the far more famous Virginia Declaration of Rights. Just as William and Mary had to agree to England's Bill of Rights before being allowed to take the throne, so in the Old Dominion the Declaration of Rights came before the Constitution.

Mason's Declaration of Rights is today his chief claim to fame, and its influence certainly has been enormous: its provisions echo across the sweep of other states' declarations of rights, as well as in the federal Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Independence. Most notable, perhaps, was Mason's thundering announcement in the Declaration of Rights' first article, which—as amended by the convention—read: "That all Men are by nature equally free and Independent and have certain inherent Rights of which when they enter into a state of Society

they cannot by any compact deprive or divest their Posterity namely the enjoyment of Life and liberty with the means of acquiring and possessing property and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety." This claim was echoed in other states' declarations of rights to great effect, notably in Massachusetts, where the judicial gloss on a Masonesque provision was that slavery was forever abolished in the Bay State.

Mason's declaration also echoed Lockean theory in claiming that since all power originates in the people, magistrates are answerable to them, and his stated that when a majority of society considered the government inimical to its "happiness and Safety," it was entitled to remake that government. Other significant provisions highlighted the right to a free press, the desirability of a broadly available suffrage, and various protections of the criminally accused.

Mason's language served as a template for Jefferson in drafting the second, theoretical sentence of the Declaration of Independence and for Madison in conceiving the federal Bill of Rights. Some of the provisions of Mason's declaration also found their way into the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen and through it ended up in the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which served as the template for similar documents in the new countries established during 20th-century decolonization. Mason would have found this last development extremely strange, for his political thinking was moored in the history of Virginia and England.

Thus, rather than devising an ideal government suitable to a panel of philosophers, he bequeathed to Virginia a government that closely resembled the one to which colonial Virginians had become accustomed—one in which the House of Delegates (heir to the House of Burgesses) predominated, the governor was beholden to the legislative elite and an executive council, and the Senate's role was tightly circumscribed.

Jefferson, already an intellectual in his early 30s, did not see the wisdom in this,

criticizing Mason's handiwork from the moment he saw it. Jefferson especially disliked the geographic—rather than population-based—legislative apportionment that the May Convention retained from English-cum-colonial practice and complained that senators should have been given nine-year (if not life) terms. Most galling to Jefferson was that the May Convention was not convened solely as a constitutional convention.

Broadwater joins most historians in echoing Jefferson's complaints without noting that they smacked of sour grapes. Jefferson had no compunction about submitting proposed constitutional provisions to the convention and asked to be relieved of his congressional duties so that he might return to Williamsburg and join in the drafting. In fact, he noted that a good state constitution was precisely the goal of the Revolution already underway and said that it would be better to accept the bad constitution that the British wanted to force on Virginia than fight a strenuous war and merely adopt a bad one written here. Apparently, Jefferson would have been content with the May Convention's role in the constitution-writing process if he had been a member of the convention.

Mason had an irrefutable response to Jefferson's claim that the May Convention was not a constitutional convention but a legislature. As Edmund Randolph later affirmed in his history of Virginia, the people of Virginia had known that the delegates they elected to the May Convention would establish Virginia's independence, so they must have intended to vest the convention with the authority to establish a new government.

One aspect of this story often overlooked is that the May Convention's three resolutions calling for a declaration of rights, a constitution, and federal and treaty relations were adopted on May 15, 1776, and Virginians celebrated their state's independence on that day. Patrick Henry was sworn in as Virginia's first republican governor on June 29, so whether one dates it from May or June, Virginia's independence, marked by its establishment of a permanent republican



government, antedated America's Declaration of Independence. That is why while other states' legislatures conditioned their declarations of independence from Britain on their sister states' behavior, Virginia's congressmen alone were instructed to move ahead and secure an American declaration of independence.

How did George Mason come to play so significant a role in establishing American republicanism? Broadwater does a good job of describing Mason's family background, his business interests, and his early political experience. He demonstrates how Mason took the lead in mobilizing resistance among his neighbors at various stages of the 1760s Imperial Crisis, and he describes Mason's characteristic disgust with most of his political colleagues' low level of ability—a disgust that prevented him from becoming a professional politician in the mode of Jefferson and Madison.

One factor not much in evidence in this volume is Mason's experience as a slave owner. His hundreds of slaves made it possible for him to contribute as he did to the establishment of the Virginian republic, and yet, while Broadwater hazards statements about Mason's supposedly prejudiced attitudes toward blacks for which he does not adduce any evidence, this subject does not receive much attention either.

Instead, *George Mason: Forgotten Founder* is essentially a political biography, one in which entire chapters are devoted to the Philadelphia Convention of 1787—of which Mason was, in terms both of his eminence and of his contributions, one of the few leading members—and the Richmond Ratification Convention of 1788, in which he played a similarly prominent role. Broadwater's exploration of Mason at Philadelphia is particularly finely wrought, and anyone wanting to understand the drafting process should henceforth consult this biography of the independent Virginian.

We learn that at Philadelphia Mason spoke more than almost all the other members, made numerous essential contributions to the final form and content of the U.S. Constitution, and then,

having stayed in the convention to the end, refused to sign the finished product. He contributed signally to the content of the final document, pushing to empower Congress to cut off slave importations, championing the Great Compromise regarding congressional apportionment, helping to defeat Madison's proposed federal veto power over state laws, establishing the procedures for congressional veto overrides, and banning federal export taxes.

At this point, my understanding diverges from Broadwater, who says that Mason did not really much care about the slave importation issue. Broadwater adopts Deep South delegates' argument that Mason's moral objection to slave importation was really a hypocritical defense of Virginia's naked economic interest. Many Virginians, such as George Washington, had more slaves than they could use productively and thus stood to benefit by restricting importation. This is an unverifiable theory, and I find it incredible because Mason never had significant economic difficulties and, as Forrest McDonald has demonstrated, frequently put the common good above his own economic interest.

Overlooked is that the New England delegates' pound of flesh also redounded to the Union's detriment. If Mason had his way on the tariff and slave importation, the two chief bones of contention in early republican and antebellum politics would have been removed. There would have been, absent the pre-1808 slave importations, inadequate supplies of blacks to convert the Deep South into a cotton kingdom and no Missouri Crisis or Bleeding Kansas episode. Had he won the day with regard to tariffs, there would have been no American System, no Nullification Crisis, and no mercantilist Republican platform of 1860. There would have been no reason to elect Abraham Lincoln president and no reason to secede from the Union.

Had Mason carried the day in Philadelphia with regard to a bill of rights, much of the impetus of the later Antifederalist movement would have been absent—especially if, as Edmund Randolph

insisted in Philadelphia, it had included a provision akin to the later Tenth Amendment. Instead, Mason returned home and published a widely read and powerfully effective description of the Constitution's faults. His role in putting insistence on a bill of rights atop the Antifederalist agenda was second to none.

Broadwater says of the ratification controversy that Mason was never a states' rights man—that the idea of states' rights was a "canard" invented later. One wishes he had explained how Mason's earlier arguments concerning the Confederation Congress's lack of power to determine the validity of the states' claims to western land differed from a states' rights argument. (That Congress had no such power; Mason said in an argument anticipating Jefferson's 1791 memo on the Bank Bill, because the Articles of Confederation gave it none, and the power thus remained with the states.) In addition, Broadwater falls into the common trap of characterizing states' rights as an Antifederalist concept. And in claiming that historians have ignored the influence of constitutional expert Richard Bland on Virginians in Mason's cohort, Broadwater also displays a lack of familiarity with the scholarly literature.

What is one to make of George Mason, then? His independence of mind and lack of concern for power-for-power's-sake certainly are appealing. (He might have had a Senate seat, a governorship, or other high office but did not want them. Imagine a contemporary politician with a good chance at the presidency who simply did not want the post.)

Mason's conservative, state-centered approach to government—based on tradition and skepticism of people in power—cannot but appeal to thoughtful Americans today. His role in establishing both the tradition of American constitutions and the tradition of American bills of rights is unsurpassed. He deserves to be recalled, and Broadwater's book is the best introduction. ■

*Kevin C. Gutzman is a professor of history at Western Connecticut State University.*

# It's All Greek to Me



If you think stand-up comedy is in a rut, you should hear Gholamhossein Elham, an Iranian government spokesman. Old Gholam had me in

stitches when he stood up and screamed foul over the blockbuster “300” a couple of weeks ago. He called the movie an insult and hostile behavior because it portrays the Persians as slobs back in 480 B.C.

Well, I've got news for Gholam. They were terrific slobs back then, and many of them continue to be slobs today. They wear tablecloths on their heads and sit on the floor to eat funny-smelling food with their hands. They also scream a lot, beat themselves to a pulp with chains, and think Uncle Sam is the great Satan. Persians, as they used to be called before the Shah decided to call them Iranians, are not popular with the neocons, however, which makes them popular with me. Sure they're slobs, but so are many people in Hollywood and Noo Yawk.

Back in the old country, we've been making jokes about the Persians since 480 B.C. But we also like them because they made heroes out of us Greeks. We only lost once to them, in Thermopylae, but there were 400,000 of them and 300 of us. A fool like Victor Davis Hanson calls that a defeat, but a far greater historian, Taki, calls it a resounding victory. Mind you, we never lost to them before or after. In 490 B.C., General Miltiades wiped the floor with them in the Battle of Marathon. Ten thousand Athenians routed 100,000 in close corps-à-corps fighting. Miltiades then ordered a fat hoplite, who had not mixed it up and was fresh, to run like hell back to Athens and tell the locals not to burn down the city as was the plan in case of a barbarian victory.

He ran the 42 kilometers, 385 yards and dropped dead as he entered the city

walls and pronounced “Enikikamen.” We won. Legend gave the credit to Pheidippides, a renowned runner, but Pheidippides was a general, and generals are not messenger boys. In any event, he was on his way to Sparta, a good three days away, to enlist Spartan help. The Spartans sat on the fence, so to speak.

But back to “300” and Gholam the angry. The historian Herodotus recorded Xerxes's army as one million strong, but it now seems to be an inflated number. The number of barbarians was closer to 400,000, or more than 1,000 to 1 against. The Spartans relished a fight, though—as long as they were the ones doing the fighting. In his book about the Peloponnesian Wars, Donald Kagan called

quickly, Western civilization would have never taken place. We'd be wearing tablecloths on our heads and would have even worse table manners than we do.

When the Spartans left their home to go up north and intercept the Persian hordes, most Greeks accepted that they would fight bravely then retreat in good order, surviving to fight another day. Not the Spartans. They actually fought to win, and could have pulled it off in the narrows of Thermopylae if it weren't for a traitor, Ephialtes, who showed the barbarians another path that enabled them to come around and encircle the Greeks. “The Spartans, reckless with their own safety and desperate, since they knew their destruction was nigh at hand, exerted themselves with the most furious valor against the barbarians,” writes Herodotus. A simple inscription marks their sacrifice: “Passerby, tell the Greeks that we have done our duty.”

**BACK IN THE OLD COUNTRY, WE'VE BEEN MAKING JOKES ABOUT THE PERSIANS SINCE 480 B.C. BUT WE ALSO LIKE THEM BECAUSE THEY MADE HEROES OUT OF US GREEKS.**

Sparta a “fascist place.” Thank God it was, otherwise it would not have survived as long as it did. My mother was a Spartan, as were both her parents, and our ancestral home is now the Spartan museum. When the Italians invaded Greece in 1940, my mother had five brothers and a husband fighting in the front. For some strange reason I suspect no Kagans ever did any fighting, but then I could be wrong.

Sure, helots worked the fields and performed all manual tasks. So do Hispanics today in America. Male Spartans were forbidden any profession, trade, or business except the business of war. Had the barbarian hordes overrun the Spartans

Athens was the cradle of democracy and birthplace of Western thought, but it was Sparta, 100 miles to the southwest, that made it possible. Their heavily armed foot soldiers used eight-deep shield walls moving in perfect step, like tanks, to bulldoze the enemy off the field of battle. In the Battle of Plataea, where they threw the Persians out of Greece forever, these Spartan formations broke through the enemy stockade and massacred everyone in sight. Never again would a Persian army invade the Greek mainland. Alexander the Great took care of them later on their home field.

Gholam, you're lucky to be living in the present. ■

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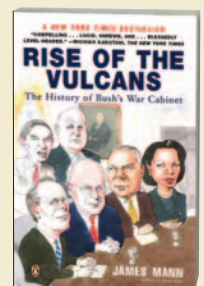
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